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# The American *Muslim* voter: Community belonging and political participation

Angela X. Ocampo[a,*], Karam Dana[b], Matt A. Barreto[a]

[a] University of California, Los Angeles, United States
[b] University of Washington, Bothell, United States

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ABSTRACT

The past few election cycles have brought increased attention on voting rates among racial and ethnic minorities in the United States, focusing on African Americans, Asian Americans and Latinos. Building on theories of in-group identity, we assess whether or not American Muslims are similarly mobilized to vote consonant with other ethnic minorities in the U.S. whereby in-group attachment and group-level resources encourage participation. Using a national sample of American Muslims, we find that those who live around more co-ethnics and those who actively engage their religious identity are more likely to report they voted, and more likely to vote Democratic. This research offers the first evidence that American Muslims may follow similar patterns of in-group identity mobilization to other racial and ethnic groups in the United States.

## 1. Introduction

The visibility of Muslim Americans highted in the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11 as they became targets of interrogation and presumed terrorism. At the same time, Muslim Americans have increasingly become victims of hate crimes and discrimination (Cainkar, 2002; Alsultany, 2006). In the political arena, parties and candidates alike have seen U.S. Muslims as a liability rather than coalition partners (Zoll, 2008). In the 2016 presidential election, Republican candidate Donald Trump ran a primary campaign that was Islamophobic. Rather than a database to target potential voters, during the campaign trail Donald Trump suggested creating a database of Muslim-Americans to “monitor” them and called for a ban on Muslims from entering the United States.[1] Other Republican candidates in the 2016 primary also referred to Muslim Americans as a threat to America and laid out policy proposals that persecuted the members of this community. Republican candidate Sen. Ted Cruz proposed that “law enforcement patrol and secure Muslim neighborhoods before they [became] radicalized.”[2] Candidate Ben Carson added to the tirade against Muslim Americans by arguing that in order to become U.S. President “you [had] to reject the tenets of Islam” as these were not compatible with the U.S. Constitution.[3]

On the left, some Democratic candidates in the last few electoral cycles have called out the antagonistic rhetoric towards U.S. Muslims. In 2008 during his bid for the presidency, Barack Obama rejected the idea that being called a Muslim, as he was often

* Corresponding author. UCLA Political Science Department, 4289 Bunche Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90095 -1427, United States.
*E-mail addresses:* angelaxocampo@ucla.edu (A.X. Ocampo), karam@uw.edu (K. Dana), barretom@ucla.edu (M.A. Barreto).

[1] The travel ban on individuals from Muslim majority countries went into effect on January 27, 2017. On March 26, 2017, a new executive order and travel ban went into effect, later revised to restrict travel from other countries. While there have been multiple legal challenges to the travel ban, individuals from Muslim majority countries have been strongly affected since its enactment. Hundreds of people have been detained and thousands of visas have been revoked.

[2] Levy, Pema. 2016. “Ted Cruz Defends his Plan to Patrol Muslim Neighborhoods.” http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2016/03/ted-cruz-defends-plan-patrol-muslim-neighborhoods-cnn-townhall Mother Jones: March 29, 2016.

[3] Bradner, Eric. 2015 “Ben Carson again explains concerns with a Muslim president.” CNN. September 27, 2015.

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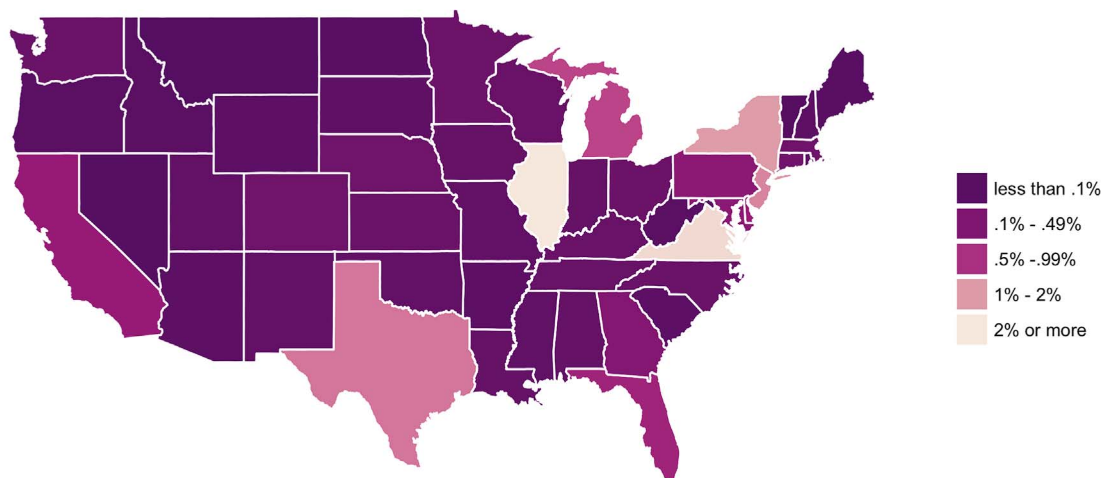



*Source: 2010 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study based on congregational membership data collected by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB).

**Fig. 1.** Muslim American Population by state.

rumored to be, was an insult. In the 2016 election, both Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders denounced the Muslim scapegoating of their GOP counterparts.[4] Clinton's campaign largely acknowledged the Muslim American community by including Khizr Khan, the father of a Muslim fallen soldier, as a speaker at the Democratic National Convention. Nonetheless, despite distancing efforts of the Democrats from the anti-Muslim sentiment of their Republican counterparts, their campaigns have not particularly prioritized large-scale efforts to mobilize Muslim Americans. Despite sporadic and local efforts of inclusion from Democrats, there have been no large-scale mobilization efforts to court U.S. Muslim voters.

In the backdrop of an anti-Muslim political context, Muslim Americans are also met with disdain and hostility in the broader U.S. society. Since the attacks of 9/11, Islamophobia in social settings has been on the rise, and the frequency of anti-Muslim violence has reached alarming levels. According to data from California State University, San Bernardino, hate crimes against American Muslims increased 78% throughout 2015.[5] The violent backlash against American Muslims stems not only from the proliferation of terrorist attacks in the United States and Europe in recent years, but it has also been fueled by the rhetoric coming from political elites and media portrayals (Dana et al., 2011; Lajevardi, 2016). Evidence suggests that there is widespread concern among U.S. Muslims that they are not welcomed in the U.S. This perceived animosity is rooted in personal experiences of discrimination as 48% of American Muslims report experiencing at least one incident of faith-based discrimination within the last year.[6]

Despite the hostile context in which Muslim Americans have found themselves in the post-September 11 era, thousands of Muslims take part in American elections each year. As Fig. 1 below indicates, there are large populations of American Muslims in battleground states such as Michigan, Virginia, Florida and Pennsylvania. U.S. Muslims also have a significant presence in other key states such as California, Texas and Illinois. As of 2015, it is estimated that there were 3.3 million Muslims in the United States. This number is expected to double by 2050.[7] Yet, despite the growing presence and influence of this community we know little about the American *Muslim* voter. The American *Muslim* voter is one that experiences high levels of discrimination, one that is met with large suspicion by the Republican party and its candidates, and one who has only received small-scale welcoming signals from the Democratic party.

In the midst of such animosity and lack of massive mobilization efforts, on what sources is the American *Muslim* voter relying on to engage in politics? What factors influence vote choice among U.S. Muslims? This paper addresses these questions. We theorize and offer evidence on the process by which U.S. Muslims overcome the toll of intolerance brought on by anti-Muslim hostility in order to part-take in the electoral process. We argue that given the post 9/11 political and social climate that surrounds U.S. Muslims, the traditional models of the American voter are far less appropriate. This is not because American *Muslim* voters may not rely on similar psychological predispositions and socioeconomic resources necessary to cast a vote, but because the political system in place post 9/11 does not afford an opportunity for full electoral inclusion of the American *Muslim* voter. While life cycle and resource-based

[4] Phillip, Abby. 2016. "Hillary Clinton broadly denounces Cruz and Trump on national security: 'Loose cannons tend to misfire'" https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/03/23/hillary-clinton-broadly-denounces cruz-and-trump-on-national-security-loose-cannons-tend-to-misfire/The Washington Post: March 23, 2016.

[5] Levin, B., 2016. Special Status Report: Hate Crime in the United States. *Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism*. https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3110202-SPECIAL-STATUS-REPORT-v5-9-16-16.html.

[6] Pew Research Center. 2017. "U.S. Muslims concerned about their place in society, but continue to believe in the American Dream." http://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/July 26, 2017.

[7] Mohamed, Besheer. 2016. "A new estimate of the U.S. Muslim population." http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/06/a-new-estimate-of-the-u-s-muslim-population/Pew Research Center. January 6, 2016.

variables are still relevant, we argue that community and group-based variables are likely to be more relevant, especially at a time when the much of the political "targeting" of Muslim Americans is xenophobic and discriminatory, and likely to result in feelings of alienation and disillusionment with the political process (Oskooii, 2016).

We identify a model of Muslim American voting and vote choice, that draws in part on previous findings for minority groups as well as the role of religion in American politics. However, the landscape is unique for Muslims, and thus our model incorporates new theoretical and empirical perspectives to account for the role of perceived discrimination, different religious traditions, the practice of Islamic tenets and the role of community membership. Moreover, we expand on existent work on Muslim American partisan identification and we investigate how factors beyond partisanship and ideology that are specific to the Muslim American experience influence vote choice.

Muslim Americans encompass a faith-based group from various racial, national, and ethnic origins. According to a 2017 Pew survey, approximately 58% of U.S. Muslims are foreign born, while 18% are second generation and 24% are third generation or more. The geographic origins of the U.S. Muslim population span all regions of the world, with the largest being South Asia. Among U.S. Muslims that were born abroad, not one single national origin group encompasses greater than 15% of that subpopulation. About 15% of adult Muslim immigrants are from Pakistan, followed by Iran (11%), India (7%), Afghanistan (6%), Bangladesh (6%), Iraq (5%), Kuwait (3%), Syria (3%) and Egypt (3%). Moreover, American Muslims are from various racial backgrounds and religious denominations. About 28% of U.S. Muslims are Asian, including South Asian, and 20% are black. Yet despite such diversity, U.S. Muslims, find themselves in a hostile and threatening climate that deems them as *others* in the ethno-racial and social hierarchy, especially in the post 9/11 era (Ayers and Hofstetter, 2008; Calfano et al., 2017). Consequently, we believe that existent work on racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S, which acknowledges the role of racialization in the political incorporation process, is particularly helpful as we ground our examination of Muslim American political engagement and vote choice. In addition to relying on these existent theories, we also believe that it is important to incorporate perspectives that allow us to examine the U.S. Muslims as also a religious minority whose political identity is strongly grounded on the collective faith of Islam –a non-traditional Western religion often times mistaken to be incompatible with U.S. democratic values (Huntington, 1996; Dana et al., 2017). Therefore, our investigation treats American Muslims as both a religious and an ethno-racial minority group and relies on both perspectives.

We argue that in a sociopolitical landscape marked by scapegoating where Muslim Americans are constantly regarded as outcasts in U.S. society and its political system, the key sources for political mobilization are at the Muslim community level. We posit that greater social connectedness to the Muslim community results in feelings of social and community belonging. In turn, these positive experiences of belonging in America afford Muslim Americans with greater political and social capital that foment a stronger sense of internal efficacy and desire to engage politically. Muslim Americans who reside among other Muslims, who also closely follow Islamic tenets, and feel a sense of social connectedness to their community are able to overcome the negative impact of societal discrimination and partake in the American political system. We also demonstrate the importance of examining Muslim community specific variables in understanding vote choice among American *Muslim* voters. Our findings reveal that Muslim Americans who have a strong connectedness to the Muslim community, that is those who reside in heavy Muslim communities and who closely follow Islamic tenets, are more likely to engage in the political process. Similarly, our findings reveal that a strong sense of belonging to the U.S. Muslim community is positively associated with Democratic vote choice.

## 2. Resources and political participation

Scholars of political behavior have established that among the strongest predictors of political engagement are psychological predispositions (Campbell et al., 1960; verba and Nie, 1972), socioeconomic and community-level resources (Verba and Nie, 1971; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980) and mobilizing agents (Green and Gerber, 2004; Garcia-Bedolla and Michelson, 2012). Of particular importance to political engagement is the role of groups in promoting involvement, even unintentionally (Leighley, 1996), by helping individuals obtain the necessary skills to partake in various forms of political engagement (Verba et al., 1993; Brady et al., 1995).

In addition to the strong relationship between socioeconomic variables and political participation, scholars of minority politics have established that group identity variables are important predictors of political engagement (verba and Nie, 1972; Miller et al., 1981; Dawson, 1994; Tate, 1994; Garcia-Bedolla, 2005). Group consciousness has been conceptualized as a collective identity which consists of feeling part of one's racial or ethnic group and sharing the commitment of working towards ameliorating the status of the group (Miller et al., 1981). Group consciousness is a critical group-based resource that has allowed disadvantaged racial and ethnic minorities to effectively participate in politics (verba and Nie, 1972). Despite heterogeneity among members of racial and ethnic groups, group consciousness has been found to be an important identity (Stokes, 2003; Masuoka, 2006) that despite its malleability among some groups (Junn and Masuoka, 2008) is a strong driver of political attitudes and behaviors (Dawson, 1994; Tate, 1994; Stokes, 2003; Sanchez, 2006).

Building on the extant work on in-group identity and group consciousness, we argue that American Muslims also rely on community and group related sources to overcome the negative externalities of hostile political and social contexts in order to engage politically. Perceived individual and group discrimination as well as historical trajectories of exclusion have been the defining features of group consciousness for various racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. (Dawson, 1994; McClain et al., 2009; Sanchez, 2006). A recognition of the marginalized conditions faced by their group combined with a desire to want to act politically in order to ameliorate the circumstances of the group has allowed members of other disadvantaged groups to become politically engaged. In a similar vein and specifically in the post 9/11 era, Muslim Americans have experienced great levels of discrimination and exclusion. Since then, a Muslim American collective identity and visibility as a political group has solidified (Ayers, 2007). In this recent era,

U.S. Muslims have witnessed the religious scapegoating against the members of their community and are currently facing the biggest threat to their wellbeing (Calfano et al., 2017). Their limited social standing as an ethno-racial and religious group stems from anti-Muslim rhetoric adopted by political elites and showcased in the media (Nacos and Torres-Reyna, 2007; Lajevardi, 2016).

As Shingles (1981) argues group consciousness helps foster a strong sense of personal efficacy. Moreover, as others have shown these feelings of efficacy translate into political efficacy on behalf of one's group thus allowing racial and ethnic minorities to over-participate in politics despite other resource obstacles (verba and Nie, 1972). Similarly, we expect that group identity variables are strongly associated with the political engagement of Muslim Americans. As we argue, group level variables are important in affording U.S. Muslims with positive experiences of community belonging whereby they can surpass the negative consequences of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim rhetoric in order to engage in politics. Building on the work of Jamal (2005), Ayers and Hofstetter (2008) and Choi et al. (2011) on the importance of mosques, recent findings (Dana et al., 2011; Dana et al., 2017) also corroborate the importance of Muslim community ties in particular mosque attendance and religiosity as being associated with greater political activity among Muslim American. Extending these prior findings, we theorize that Muslim Americans rely on in-group identity and community-level variables to overcome the detrimental impact of societal discrimination in order to engage politically.

## 3. Social connectedness and political participation

Social scientists have been long invested in understanding some of the sociological foundations of political involvement. Many have studied these by operationalizing social connectedness through church attendance, involvement in organizations and in some instances home ownership. Research indicates that African Americans and Latinos who belong to a church and are members of civic organizations are much more likely to vote (Tate, 1991; Harris, 1994; Verba et al., 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Huckle and Garcia-Rios, 2014). It is argued that social networks foment higher levels of political participation by stimulating a collective interest in politics (Putnam, 1995, 2000), by making the act of participation much easier (Verba et al., 1995) and also by making people much more readily available for mobilization by elites and others (Leighley, 1996). Social networks and connections to other people are thought to influence participation in politics by allowing people to overcome constraints faced at the individual level (McClurg, 2003). Social capital is generated through personal networks and interactions among individuals. Consequently, the acquisition of social and political capital through these networks also increases the likelihood that an individual will become politically engaged (La Due Lake and Huckfeldt, 1998).

Recent work has explored to extent to which the concentration of Muslims in a given neighborhood or geographic region influences their level of registration and turnout (Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2008a, 2008b). This scholarship has established that Muslim registration and turnout in Britain, in the aggregate and regardless of geographic unit, increases as the local population of Muslims also increases, even after controlling for socioeconomic factors and other political variables (Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2008a, 2008b). Even though these findings focus on Muslims in the United Kingdom, who encompass a community distinct from that of American Muslims, these findings in combination with other important work in the U.S. shed light on how connectedness to others of one's religious group seems to provide resources that are empowering and lead to mobilization (Verba et al., 1993). Whether or not a similar process takes places in the U.S. context among American Muslims is yet to be tested.

In this paper, we build on prior findings on social connectedness and group-based identity and argue that in the absence of resources for political mobilization or campaign get-out-the-vote efforts, Muslim Americans rely on the socio-political capital obtained through their religious and ethnic context to participate politically. We believe that it is these resources and a sense of belonging to the Muslim American community what allows Muslim Americans to overcome the adverse circumstances they otherwise face in U.S. society. A sense of connectedness and community foments political interest among American Muslims and a desire to act politically. These resources ultimately allow Muslim Americans to become engaged in the political system.

In the absence of substantive mobilization by political parties and their candidates, community organizations have taken up the task of organizing the Muslim American community. These groups include the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Islamic Circle of North America and the U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations.[8] During electoral cycles, these organizations have engaged in registration drives and have encouraged mosques to become voter registration centers. Thus, we expect that social connectedness and a feeling of community belonging, not acquired elsewhere by American Muslims, is instrumental in providing Muslims with the necessary resources and impetus to engage in the political process.

The grounds for our argument is that the experiences of Muslim Americans in the U.S. are unique experiences marked by hostility and discrimination. Young Muslim Americans believe that discrimination towards Muslims has only increased since 9/11.[9] Moreover, in the aftermath of recent terrorist attacks and most recently since the election of Donald Trump there has been an unprecedented backlash against American Muslims.[10] While Muslim Americans are growing up in a society that negatively targets them, discriminates towards them and deems them as a threat to American society, their Anglo counterparts are socialized in different and much more positive contexts. White Americans are socialized politically in contexts that are devoid of outright hostility, and contexts that allow them to gain a sense of political efficacy because most of their interactions are positive. Our argument is that given the

[8] Rappeport, Alan. 2016. “Feeling G.O.P. Peril, Muslims try to Get Out Vote.” http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/25/us/politics/republicans-muslim-americans-vote.html?_r=0 The New York Times. March 26, 2016.

[9] Rogers, Tim. 2015. “Young Muslim Americans say discrimination is ‘worse now than after 9/11’” http://fusion.net/story/245787/muslim-americans-discrimination-is-worse-911-gop-debate/Fusion. December 15, 2015.

[10] Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) “CAIR Reports Unprecedented Backlash Against American Muslims After Paris Attacks.” https://www.cair.com/press-center/press-releases/13277-cair-reports-unprecedented-backlash-against-american-muslims-after-paris-attacks.html November 24, 2015.

current everyday experiences of Muslim Americans, what allows them to become political participants is the strong level of connectedness to the religious and ethnic contexts that surround them – the Muslim American community. – A sense of community allows Muslim Americans to feel cohesion, connectedness and belonging that they cannot find in the broader U.S. society.

## 4. Religion and vote choice

Scholars who have studied religiosity and its connections to partisanship have focused on the cleavages between Catholics, Jews and Protestants with regards to their voting choice. In *The American Voter*, the importance of religiosity was strongly highlighted (Campbell et al., 1960). Scholars have examined whether or not a high sense of social group identity with one's religious group drive in anyway partisan tendencies. The have found that it matters. Jews were found to be more likely to vote Democrat consistently, as a result of high degrees of religious identity. Similarly, Catholics who identify strongly with the church behaved cohesively, and regularly voting Democrat, voted overwhelmingly for Democrats in the 1950s (Campbell et al., 1960). On the other hand, Protestants and Evangelicals have tended to vote Republican, especially as their degree of religiosity increased. An exception to this was in 1976 they voted Democrat when Jimmy Carter, who is a born-again Southern Baptist, was the Democratic candidate. Though religious identity matters, one's denomination alone may not be the dominant cleavage anymore in religion in politics, as argued by several scholars: that the degree of orthodoxy, intensity of religious identity, church attendance and religious attitudes are the most relevant variables in understanding partisanship (Welch and Leege, 1991; Layman, 1997; Jelen and Wilcox, 1997).

Within the field of minority politics, scholars have addressed the role of the church and religiosity as important in the study of party identification. Research on religion and the African American community finds that more religious individuals are more likely to vote Democrat, a result of the black church's critical role in the civil rights movement. Higher church attendance has also been found to increase Democratic partisanship among blacks, especially in the South. One contributing factor is social group identity and the concept of linked fate. Harris (1999) notes that blacks and African Americans have a high sense of linked fate, in part based on similar experiences within black churches, which have promoted social group cohesion, group identity, and a sense of empowerment. While many studies link religious conservativism with Republican identification among whites, McDaniel and Ellison (2008) underscore that religiosity does not operate the same way for blacks, and that religiously conservative blacks still side with the Democratic Party. Their findings are particularly important because they highlight the differences between religion and partisanship among whites and minority groups in America, and suggest that scholars identify novel perspectives for religion and vote choice for blacks and Latinos, and we would argue, for Muslim Americans.

While religiosity has been most noted as an important variable in black partisanship, research on Latinos and Asian Americans also suggests that religiosity influences vote choice. Among Latinos, Lee and Pachon (2007) examine religiosity and vote choice and find that religiosity is a very salient variable for Latino evangelicals, who were significantly more likely to vote Republican, while religion had little to no effect for other Latinos who tended to vote Democrat regardless of religiosity. Kelly and Kelly (2005) explained that Latinos are religiously diverse, and that evangelicals and mainline Protestants are significantly more likely to be Republicans, while Catholics and non-religious Latinos are more Democratically-oriented. Likewise, Pantoja (2010) finds that born-again and evangelical Latinos to be significantly more conservative on education issues and more like to be Republican. On the other hand, the Catholic church has provided less political cues or mobilization to Latinos, and seen as less of a source of political engagement (Verba et al., 1995). However, the strong role of the Catholic church in the 2006 immigrant rights marches may be changing this notion as the church played a larger role in Latino political socialization (Barreto et al., 2009).

Asian Americans encompass a diverse group with equally diverse religious practices as Muslim Americans. The PNAAPS and the NAAS, major national surveys of Asian Americans have found that religiosity is a relevant political force. Lien et al. (2004) finds that religiosity among Asian Americans greatly shapes their ethnic identity, which in turn, influences their partisanship and political attitudes. One reason religion has been important to Asian Americans is the role of the church in providing services and also a sense of community. Kim (1996) found the Korean Church to provide four major sociological functions: a social center for immigrants; provides information on social services in America; leadership opportunities; and strengthens ethnic identification. While none of the functions is overtly political, they provide the bases for many in the community to engage the political system. Data from the PNAAPS and the NAAS suggests that religion does play a role in the partisan preferences of Asian Americans. (Lien et al., 2004; Wong et al., 2011). Lien finds that Christians and Protestants are the most likely to align themselves with the Republican Party. Similar analysis by Wong and Iwamura (2007) also concludes that Asian American Protestants were significantly more likely to be Republican as compared to non-Protestant Asians, though the result is not as strong as among white Protestants (see also Wong et al., 2008). Wong et al., 2011 also find that Asians who are likely to identify with no religious tradition are more liberal on abortion issues but not necessarily immigration or healthcare issues.

With respect to Muslim Americans little work exists on predicting vote choice, and the development of partisan identification (Jalalzai, 2009; Barreto and Bozonelos, 2009). Barreto and Bozonelos (2009) demonstrate that a significant portion of American Muslims answer “none” to the question of which party they feel closer to, and this may be the result of perceptions of anti-Muslim attitudes in America. While journalistic accounts have reported large shifts in vote patterns from the 1990s–2000s to today, few have investigated shifts in the vote choice of Muslim Americans, and increased political interest and involvement in the post 9/11 era that has been characterized by a heightened level of racial profiling and discrimination towards Muslims (Ayers, 2007; Jalalzai, 2009; Schoettmer, 2015). Based on religious faith American Muslims should be inclined to support conservative candidates, however, in the aftermath of 9/11 and the subsequent consequences of the war on terror, U.S. Muslims have been less likely to support Republican candidates (Ayers, 2007). In fact, religiosity was strongly and positively associated with support for John Kerry (Ayers, 2007). Some scholars point out variation in the shifts towards a Democratic vote choice by regional origin. In fact, a more Democratic shift was

more prevalent among those who reported more negative treatment towards U.S. Muslims since the start of the war on terror (Jalalzai, 2009).

Similar findings pertaining to Latinos have shown that anti-Latino rhetoric and anti-immigration policies have resulted in greater support for Democratic candidates (Bowler et al., 2006). This work along with other findings that speak to partisan realignment driven by increasing levels of support for Democrats in the 1950s and 60s (Carmines and Stimson, 1989) suggest that racial and group specific cues are important elements of vote choice among minority groups. Though we are not specifically interested in examining the large shifts in the partisanship and vote choice of Muslim Americans in recent decades, we do believe that prior work on religion and vote choice as well as racial threat suggest that Muslim Americans may also rely on perceived threat to their group and in-group identity to inform their vote choice.

We expect that vote choice among American Muslims will be driven by community-level and group identity factors in addition to partisan identification. Though we expect partisanship and ideology to be strong determinants of candidate choice in all elections, we argue that Muslim Americans also rely on additional cues particularly at the community level to inform their vote choice. Our vote choice examination covers the 2006 and the 2008 elections. As such, our hypotheses depart from this time frame. We expect to find that connectedness to the Muslim American community will translate into greater support for Democratic candidates. In the post 9/11 era, Muslim Americans have witnessed high levels of discrimination and mistrust, particularly from Republican elites. Moreover, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, there were a number of landmark policies by President Brush that were perceived as being against the Muslim American community. These include the PATRIOT Act, Bush' support of Israel policies towards Palestinians and inaction regarding the escalating levels of discrimination towards U.S. Muslims (Ba-Yunus and Kone, 2006; Barreto and Bozonelos, 2009). We hypothesize that connectedness to the Muslim community is a strong predictor in support of Democrats and in opposition to the increasingly hostile policies from Republican candidates.

## 5. Data and methodological approach

To investigate Muslim American voting behavior and the particular factors that motivate their participation in U.S. elections and vote choice, we conducted an original public opinion survey among Muslim Americans.[11] Little empirical data exists regarding Muslims in America. Among the few Pew or Zogby polls none contained questions about social connectedness and group-specific variables that we were interested in studying. Therefore, we conducted the 2008 Muslim American Public Opinion Survey (MAPOS) and incorporated key items of interest to understand how social connectedness and belonging to the Muslim community are related to Muslim American political participation and vote choice.

MAPOS addresses the lack of data in the Muslim American community through a face-to-face public opinion survey across a diverse cross-section of American cities. MAPOS was fielded across twenty-two locations in eleven cities: Seattle, WA, Dearborn, MI, San Diego, CA, Irvine, CA, Riverside, CA, Los Angeles, CA and Raleigh-Durham, NC, Chicago, IL, Dallas, TX, Houston, TX, Washington D.C., and Oklahoma City, OK. The sample represents an incredibly diverse cross-section of cities and the American Muslim population, including interview sites in the East, West, and Midwest, as well as the major Muslim population centers in the U.S. The sample includes large numbers of Arab, Asian, and (U.S. born) African American Muslim respondents, making it quite representative of the overall U.S. Muslim population.

The recruitment for MAPOS happened face-to-face, and subjects then self-administered the survey whereby research assistants[12] handed out clipboards to participants who completed the survey in their own privacy. Given heightened concerns over surveillance in the American Muslim community in the post 9/11 era, we believe a self-administered survey is the most reliable method to avoid social acquiescence and social desirability bias. A considerable amount of research has also shown that attitudes on sensitive topics are more truthfully reported in surveys that are conducted in a private and self-administered manner (Krysan, 1998; Tourangeau and Yan, 2007) and that and that minorities are likely to moderate their attitudes when being interviewed by non-whites, the typical method in telephone surveys (Krysan and Couper, 2003; Davis, 1997).

MAPOS data collection relied on a crowd-based sampling strategy throughout convention centers where the Eid was taking place. There is rich literature on sampling respondents in large crowds, whether it is sporting events (Tapp and Clowes, 2002) or protest marches (Walgrave and Verhulst, 2011). Based on the extant literature, MAPOS implemented three practices that were essential to gaining an accurate sample. By being spread throughout the large event at multiple locations and using skip pattern to select respondents, MAPOS retained elements of random selection into our study.

In total, 1410 surveys were completed across the eleven locations, and the general demographics of the sample closely match those reported in a similar Pew survey of Muslim Americans implemented at a similar time. For example, our sample is comprised of 57% foreign born U.S. Muslims, while the 2007 Pew survey reports 65%. In our sample 36% Muslim Americans are between the ages of 18–29 and Pew reports similar rates at around 30%. Our sample is slightly more Sunni (65%) than the Pew survey (50%). However, with regards to racial and ethnic characteristics, our sample is comparable to the Pew survey. MAPOS is 29% Asian, 15% black, 8% white and 40% Arab compared to 20% Asian, 26% black, 11% white and 51% Arab in the Pew survey.[13] Additional details and descriptives about the MAPOS sample can be found in appendices A and B.

[11] 2008 Muslim American Public Opinion Survey http://www.muslimamericansurvey.org/.

[12] Research assistants were themselves Muslim, predominantly second generation, most fluent in a second language (Arabic or Urdu) and were balanced between men and women. All research assistants attending two training sessions, and participated in a pilot survey to ensure consistency and professionalism.

[13] https://www.pewresearch.org/files/old-assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf.

To assess political participation among Muslim Americans we examine both voter turnout and vote choice. The first dependent variable related to turnout is measured as self-reported decision to vote in the most recent election (2006 or 2008). While we would prefer to have validated turnout, exit polls do not have a sample of non-voters, and due to anonymity requirements, we could not follow-up and validate the turnout of each survey respondent. While we acknowledge self-reported turnout has some bias, we are not interested in quoting a precise turnout rate, but rather discovering predictors of turnout, and thus we follow a long tradition of political science research using self-reported turnout data (Dawson, 1994; Brady et al., 1995; Leighley and Nagler, 2013). In fact, our sample reports appropriate variation on the turnout variable, with 61% stating they had voted and 39% admitting they had not voted. We suspect there may be less social desirability on a turnout question for American Muslims because their group has not been welcomed as insiders, as we note above, and hence there is not much pressure to say they voted. Our second dependent variable measures vote choice in either the 2006 or 2008 election, and asks respondents if they voted for the Democratic candidate, the Republican candidate, or some other candidate.[14] Overall, 70% say they supported a Democrat, 9% supported a Republican, and 21% say they supported a third-party candidate.

Many of the variables that we are interested in revolve around the practice of Islam and the degree of connection to the Muslim American community. There are four specific variables that we focus on to test the relationship between closely following Muslim tenets and connectedness to the U.S. Muslim community. The first variable measures the religious-ethnic context in which each respondent lives. We asked, "In general, are the people you live around, Muslim, non-Muslim, or both?" and coded this as a dummy variable where if respondents reported living next to Muslim neighbors it was coded as 1, and a 0 otherwise. Overall, 30% said they live around non-Muslims, the remainder reside among a combination of both or mostly Muslims. The second variable in this series is mosque involvement, and we use a similar question to Jamal (2005) as to how involved one is in their local mosque, beyond Friday prayers, ranging from not at all to very involved.

The next religious-based independent variable, which we call *Quran guidance*, is based on the question, "How much do you follow the Qu'ran and Hadith in your daily life? Very much/Somewhat/Only a little/Not at all." This variable is important because it assesses the degree to which Muslims bring Islam into their personal, and daily lives, as opposed to a once a week experience for Friday prayers in the mosque.

Finally, we include a variable called *follow Islam*, which measures the knowledge and actual practice of Islamic teachings. This variable is constructed based on the following two questions in the survey: "Which is not a month in the Islamic calendar?" and "During 2006 did you provide *Sadakah* to a Muslim individual or organization?" The first question about the Islamic calendar presented four possible options, and respondents were re-coded as simply correct or incorrect. Among our sample, 79% knew which month was not in the Islamic calendar. The second question about *Sadakah* determines practice. *Sadakah* (or sometimes *zakat*), means voluntary charity and is one of the pillars of Islam. According to the Qu'ran Muslims are required to give *Sadakah* every year. In our sample, two-thirds of respondents practiced *Sadakah*. In combination, the variable *follow Islam* is a measure of how closely the respondent knows and follows the pillars of the religion.

We also include many standard demographic and control variables. As we noted above, experiences with discrimination are particularly relevant to formulating positive or negative attitudes about political participation among racial and ethnic minority groups. As such, we include a variable, *airport discrimination*, for whether or not respondents believe airport security measures are targeted at Muslims (1), or to all American equally (0). Next, we include a series of demographic dummy variables for whether the respondent is black or Asian (Arab is the comparison group), Sunni Muslim, foreign born, a U.S. citizen, and if they speak mostly English at home. Finally, we include many standard predictors of political participation such as age, income, education, gender, news consumption, and tenure in the community.

## 6. The findings

Results are reported for two different dependent variables – the decision to vote, and Democratic versus Republican vote choice. All models utilized logistic regression where the dependent variables were coded 0 or 1. In all of our models our standard errors are clustered by state. For each, we present three models – first a baseline model using traditional predictors of voting behavior, second an expanded regression with additional Muslim-related independent variables and third a model that includes all previous variables and a combined measure called *Muslim environment.* This variable includes the *follow Islam* item and the *Muslim neighbors* item, so as to better capture the relationship a perceived sense of connectedness to the Muslim American community on turnout and vote choice. These specific variables are of key interest to our study, as we expect that it is a sense of belonging and a perceived connection to the Muslim community that affords American *Muslims* with a great level of sociopolitical efficacy which results in greater levels of political engagement.

Prior to looking at the results from the models, we present a portray of individuals in the MAPOS data. In particular, we are interested in understanding who are individuals with the highest and lowest levels of social connectedness or belonging to the Muslim American community, since these are our key independent variables. The *Muslim environment* variable ranges from 0 to 3, with 3 indicating the highest level of belonging to the Muslim American community. About 13% of MAPOS respondents have low levels of social connectedness to other U.S. Muslims, while 38.2% have a mid-level of connectedness and 47.9% have the highest level. Among

[14] To keep the question comparable across years, we asked, "In the contest for U.S. Congress, even if you did not vote, did you support the Republican candidate, Democratic candidate, Other?" Later in the survey we asked if they had voted, and if they were U.S. citizens, which allows us to screen out non-voters, or non-citizens. We chose to ask this question of all respondents regardless of voter registration or citizenship status to allow us to compare voters and non-voters preferences, which we do in other work.

**Table 1**
Predictors of voter turnout among Muslim Americans.

| | Dependent variable: | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Voted | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| | Baseline model | Add. Muslim Vars. | Comb. Muslim Vars. |
| **Muslim Variables** | | | |
| Muslim environment | | | 0.634*** (0.082) |
| Muslim neighbors | | 0.477*** (0.109) | |
| Follow Islam | | 0.731*** (0.169) | |
| Airport discrim. | | 0.791*** (0.218) | 0.799*** (0.213) |
| Quran guidance | | −0.183 (0.324) | −0.169 (0.313) |
| Mosque attendance | | −0.162 (0.321) | −0.162 (0.317) |
| Mosque diversity | | 0.001 (0.002) | 0.001 (0.002) |
| Sunni | | −0.771** (0.253) | −0.751** (0.256) |
| English | | −0.064 (0.205) | −0.035 (0.209) |
| **Socioeconomic status** | | | |
| Income | 0.080 (0.110) | 0.059 (0.164) | 0.062 (0.160) |
| Education | 0.291**(0.105) | 0.445***(0.100) | 0.460*** (0.103) |
| Homeowner | 0.188 (0.245) | 0.272 (0.214) | 0.281 (0.220) |
| **Partisanship** | | | |
| Ideology | −0.078 (0.096) | 0.091 (0.079) | 0.094 (0.081) |
| Democrat | −0.023 (0.431) | −0.794 (0.699) | −0.781 (0.671) |
| Independent | 0.210 (0.446) | −0.865 (0.861) | −0.842 (0.821) |
| No PID | −1.026* (0.449) | −2.191*** (0.629) | −2.169***(0.591) |
| **Demographics** | | | |
| Age | 0.330* (0.146) | 0.476* (0.206) | 0.477* (0.205) |
| Female | −0.064 (0.178) | 0.042 (0.355) | 0.049 (0.361) |
| Arab | 0.826* (0.363) | 1.022** (0.394) | 0.994* (0.395) |
| Asian | 0.278 (0.291) | 0.465 (0.429) | 0.424 (0.399) |
| Black | 0.397 (0.398) | 0.777 (0.647) | 0.752 (0.629) |
| Other race | 0.264 (0.438) | 0.651 (0.796) | 0.608 (0.776) |
| Foreign born | −0.560*** (0.122) | −0.725*** (0.122) | −0.715*** (0.132) |
| **Additional controls** | | | |
| Years in city | 0.310*** (0.087) | 0.250*** (0.067) | 0.252*** (0.066) |
| Pol. knowledge | −0.096 (0.094) | 0.021 (0.128) | 0.033 (0.123) |
| News | 0.342** (0.125) | 0.394 (0.255) | 0.396 (0.257) |
| Constant | −3.161*** (0.555) | −4.849*** (0.883) | −4.972*** (0.804) |

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.
Note: Logistic regression coefficients. Clustered Standard errors in parenthesis. DV = 1 Voted, 0 = Did not vote.

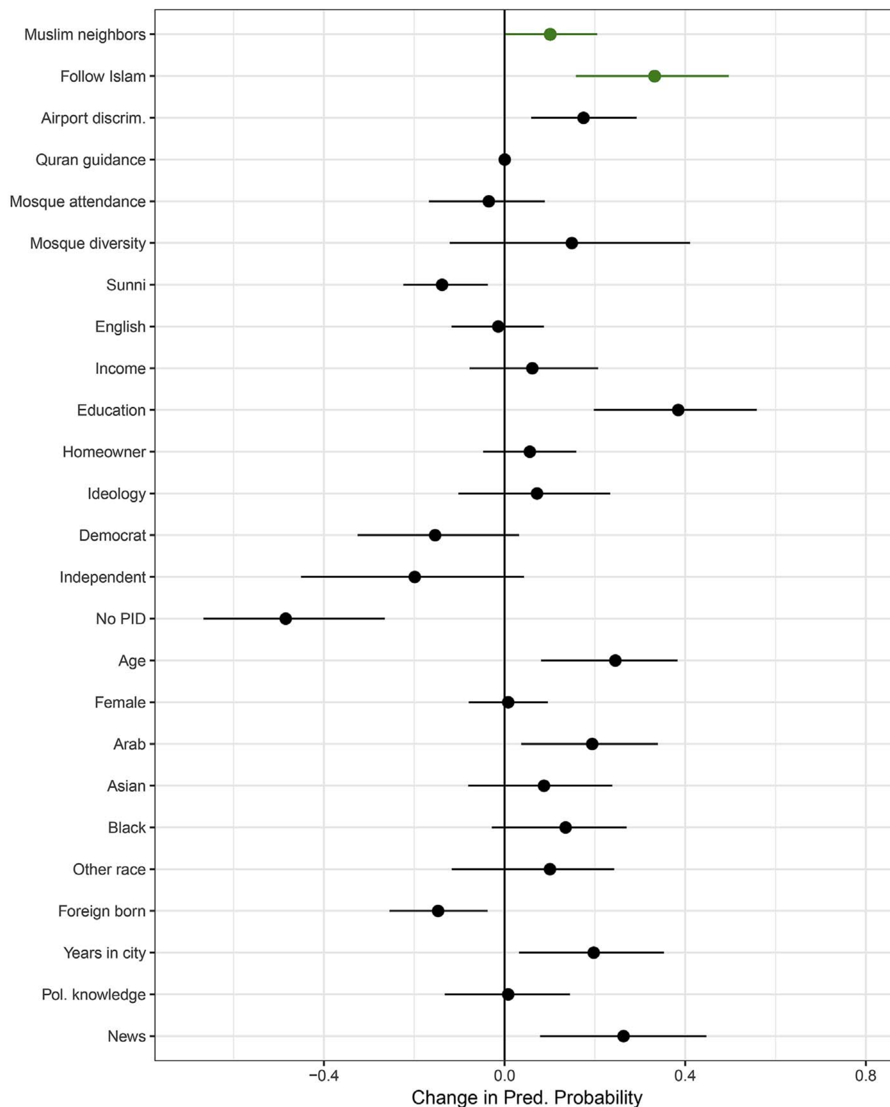
those in the highest category of *Muslim environment* 58.9% are foreign born and 41.1% are U.S. born. Similarly, those with the highest perceived sense of connectedness to the Muslim American community 51.9% reported that airport measures discriminate against Muslim Americans. With regards to income, only 10% of those with the highest levels of *Muslim environment* have an income that is less than $20,000, whereas this was 18.9% have an income of $40,000 to $59,000, 17.3% have an income of $60,000 to $79,000, 16.3% have an income of $80,000 to $100,000 and 24.4% have an income that is over $100,000.

We start by examining predictors of turnout (Table 1, column 1). Age, education and attention to news are all positively related to voting, while being foreign-born is negatively related. This finding contrasts existing findings that suggest that foreign born individuals from other racial and ethnic groups are much more likely to vote (Michelson and Bedolla, 2014). Length of residence in one's city is positively related to voting. We also find that Arab Muslims are more likely to report having voted than those who identify as white. Finally, stating a preference for no political party is negatively related to turnout.

In the expanded model, we add additional variables related to religiosity, language, perceived discrimination, and Muslim neighbors (Table 1, column 2). These are key variables of interest as they help us measure collective belonging to the Muslim American community. Looking to the new independent variables, we find that perceived discrimination increases the likelihood of voting. Those who perceive airport measures to be unfairly targeted towards Muslims, were on average, 17.7% percent more likely to vote (Fig. 2). In previous work, scholars have demonstrated that alienation, perceived prejudice and discrimination may have a mobilizing effect on racial and ethnic minorities.

For a more intuitive interpretation of the key predictors on Muslim American turnout Fig. 2 displays the changes in predicted probability (or first difference) from Table 1, model 2 when moving each variable from its minimum to its maximum, as well as the 95% confidence interval. We find evidence that those who live among other Muslims are more likely to vote as compared to those who live areas with few Muslim neighbors. Muslims who live closer to other Muslims tend to civically engage and vote more than others who do not live within close to other Muslims.

It is important to note that Muslim Americans do not gravitate towards highly dense “ethnic” or religious neighborhoods, as other

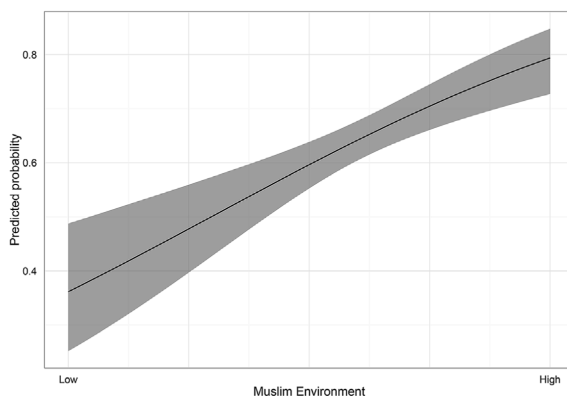



**Note: Dots indicate the change in predicted probability of self-reported turnout when moving each variable form its min to its max. The lines mark the uncertainty of the change in the predicted probability with 95% c.i.*
*Substantive effects of Muslim variables model, as shown on table 1, model 2.*

**Fig. 2.** Change in predicted probability of voting among Muslim Americans.

racial, ethnic or religious minorities might. However, as the findings indicate connectedness to other Muslims appears to positively influence them to engage in the political process. The fact that Muslims, who live close to one another, are more likely to vote suggests they are likely to have a higher level of liked fate and a greater sense of connectedness to other Muslims. These are all communicated through similar experiences in their daily lives, compared to those Muslims who do not live close to other Muslims. A collective religious identity and its salience in voting has no religious explanation. If Muslims hesitate to participate in politics, they are less likely to do so when they live closer and interact more frequently with other Muslims. This phenomenon can be best explained by viewing Muslims as a minority group, similar to Latinos and blacks, where ethnically concentrated areas in the U.S. provide a positive in-group cohesion that is not found in other social settings. What is important here is that social connectedness within the Muslim community appears to be critical in allowing Muslim Americans to gain a level of community belonging that propels them to channel the hostility directed to them on a daily basis and participate politically.

While mosque involvement and Qu'ran guidance do not make Muslims more likely to vote, those who follow Islam, measured here as through the practice of Sadakah and having knowledge of the Islamic calendar, are significantly more likely to vote. This suggests that a more active Muslim lifestyle whereby civic engagement is encouraged individually and through the community are much more likely to report that they voted. We find those who follow Islam more actively, are 34 percent more likely to vote than those who do




**Note: Solid line indicates the predicted probability of self-reported turnout as a function of degree of Muslim environment. All other covariates are held at their means. Shaded regions mark the uncertainty of the predicted probability with 95% c.i. Substantive effect of Muslim environment variable, as shown on table 1, model 3.*

**Fig. 3.** Predicted probability of Muslim turnout by degree of Muslim environment.

not – one of the most robust findings among the significant variables in the model. Such as strong finding supports other findings by Dana et al. (2011) and Dana et al. (2017) which indicate Islamic teachings are compatible with integration and participation in America.

In order to better understand the effect of both following Islam, and living in close proximity to other Muslims, model 3 in Table 1 presents an additional model with the variable *Muslim environment*. The substantive effect of this variable on turnout is depicted in Fig. 3. Turnout is expected to be 45 points higher, from an estimated low of 36 percent likelihood of voting, to a high of 80 percent likelihood of voting when moving from very few to a higher number of Muslim neighbors, practicing Sadakah, and knowing the Islamic calendar. This finding, again, indicates that closeness to a Muslim social and religious environment is very strongly and positively associated with turnout.

Turning now to the vote choice models (Table 2), we find support for traditional models of two-party vote, as well as evidence that Muslim-specific variables are relevant. Looking to the fully specified model (model 2), Muslims of another race were less likely to vote Democrat. Partisanship works as expected, with Democratic identifiers heavily voting Democrat, though we also find strong evidence that those who identify as Independent or choose no party, are also significantly more likely to prefer Democratic candidates. Last, those who more closely follow political news and events were more likely to vote Democrat.

Among the additional variables included in Table 2 model 2, two are consistent with the turnout model in Table 1 – living around other Muslims leads to higher Democratic vote share. Also, as compared to non-Sunni's, Sunni Muslims are somewhat less likely to vote Democrat and those with greater incomes are less likely to vote Democrat. Fig. 4 depicts the change in predicted probabilities for all variables in Table 2, model 2. This plot indicates the first differences when moving each variable from its minimum to its maximum and holding all other covariates at their mean. While party identification does much of the work in the vote choice model, other variables also tell an important story, especially in connection with the previous model for turnout. We find that living in a predominant Muslim neighborhood leads to both higher turnout, and higher propensity to vote Democrat. Those who have more Muslim neighbors as opposed to having very few are 8% more likely to vote Democratic. Similar results have been documented for Latinos and African Americans, but this is the first to consider both a sense of community belonging to the Muslim American community and ethnically-relevant variables for Muslim Americans. The combined model (model 3, Table 2) reiterates the significant effect of Muslim environment where the change in predicted probability when moving from a low to a high Muslim community environment results in a 39% change in the probability of voting Democrat (see Fig. 5).

## 7. Conclusion

Mobilization of the American *Muslim* voter by political campaigns, political parties and candidates has been limited. The most visible forms of targeting towards Muslims in recent elections and in the 2016 cycle have been overrun with hostility and anti-Muslim sentiment. For the most part, recent presidential campaigns are void of genuine efforts to integrate Muslim American voters. Thus, it is under these circumstances that we investigated the factors responsible for mobilizing Muslim American voters and influencing their vote choice.

It is clear that the everyday experiences of Muslim Americans are marked by Islamophobia and encounters of discrimination, particularly in the post 9/11 era and in the aftermath of recent ISIS terrorist attacks. As a result, Muslim Americans turn to their own community to develop a positive sense of social connectedness and community belonging in the United States. Cohesion to the Muslim community allows Muslim Americans to counter the otherwise negative experiences they face on a regular basis and develop political tools such as efficacy to engage in the political process. Closely following Islamic pillars in addition to being close to other Muslim neighbors foster interactions that make Muslim Americans feel more connected to one another and more likely to engage politically. That is, even after recognizing that U.S. society discriminates towards them.

**Table 2**
Predictors of democratic vote among Muslim Americans.

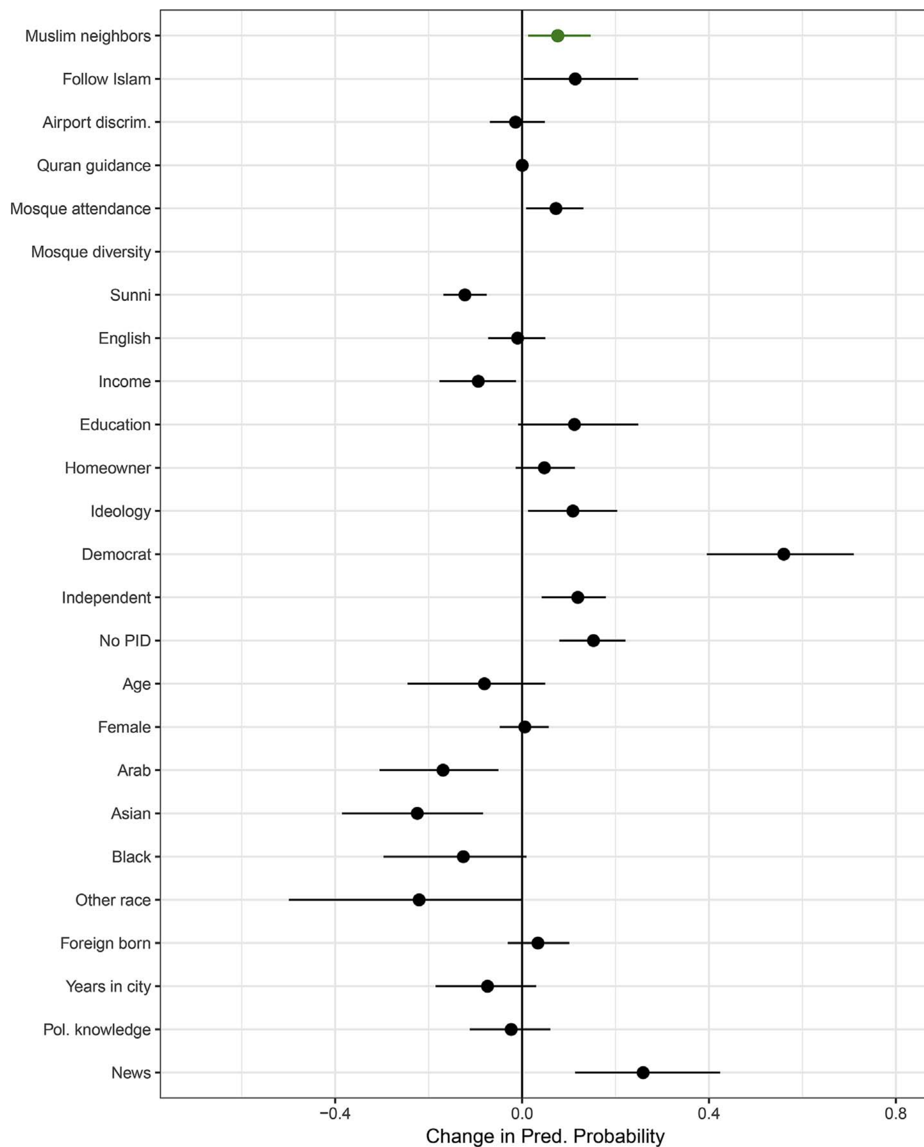
| | Dependent variable: | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Vote choice | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| | Baseline Model | Add. Muslim Variables | Combined Muslim Variables |
| **Muslim Variables** | | | |
| Muslim environment | | | 0.463** (0.176) |
| Muslim neighbors | | 0.581** (0.201) | |
| Follow Islam | | 0.381 (0.285) | |
| Airport discrim. | | −0.129 (0.212) | −0.130 (0.206) |
| Quran guidance | | −0.197 (0.197) | −0.208 (0.180) |
| Mosque attendance | | 0.686 (0.495) | 0.694 (0.485) |
| Mosque diversity | | −0.009** (0.003) | −0.009** (0.003) |
| Sunni | | −1.310*** (0.394) | −1.314*** (0.397) |
| English | | −0.075 (0.262) | −0.088 (0.280) |
| **Socioeconomic status** | | | |
| Income | −0.077 (0.069) | −0.162* (0.068) | −0.164* (0.067) |
| Education | 0.072 (0.145) | 0.204 (0.143) | 0.193 (0.155) |
| Homeowner | 0.266 (0.199) | 0.384 (0.370) | 0.378 (0.366) |
| **Partisanship** | | | |
| Ideology | −0.005 (0.112) | 0.237* (0.099) | 0.231* (0.110) |
| Democrat | 2.530*** (0.409) | 3.693*** (0.545) | 3.692*** (0.554) |
| Independent | 1.032*** (0.288) | 1.485* (0.614) | 1.464* (0.635) |
| No PID | 1.098* (0.502) | 1.842** (0.572) | 1.829** (0.577) |
| **Demographics** | | | |
| Age | −0.023 (0.113) | −0.190 (0.186) | −0.190 (0.189) |
| Female | −0.080 (0.176) | 0.050 (0.305) | 0.039 (0.292) |
| Arab | −0.265 (0.445) | −1.246 (0.655) | −1.228 (0.658) |
| Asian | −0.524 (0.349) | −1.507***(0.432) | −1.489*** (0.435) |
| Black | 0.018 (0.444) | −0.839 (0.665) | −0.821 (0.677) |
| Other race | −0.928* (0.453) | −1.228 (0.978) | −1.197 (0.967) |
| Foreign born | 0.151 (0.211) | 0.282 (0.148) | 0.271 (0.140) |
| **Additional Controls** | | | |
| Years in city | 0.021 (0.146) | −0.148 (0.125) | −0.150 (0.123) |
| Pol. knowledge | −0.252 (0.184) | −0.092 (0.378) | −0.110 (0.352) |
| News | 0.351** (0.133) | 0.535*** (0.121) | 0.539*** (0.119) |
| Constant | −1.322** (0.414) | 1.089 (1.013) | 1.177 (0.944) |
| Observations | 853 | 838 | 838 |
| Log Likelihood | −404.15 | −375.58 | −375.85 |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | 844.30 | 803.16 | 801.70 |

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.
Note: Logistic regression coefficients. Clustered Standard errors in parenthesis. DV = 1 Dem vote, 0 = Other.

As research has shown, social discriminatory experiences can have a disengaging impact on the political participation of American Muslims (Oskooii, 2016). However, as we show here, potentially some of the consequential negative effects of societal discrimination on Muslim Americans could be overcome *if* they develop feelings of belonging and connectedness to the Muslim American community. However, it is not the case that all Muslim Americans will develop a sense of community belonging and connectedness to other Muslims. If that is the case, then American Muslim voters who experience societal discrimination and do not develop feelings of group and religious linked fate could become politically alienated. This underscores the need for more research to understand what are the overall sources of political incorporation and political socialization of Muslim Americans, and how do these fully play out in the presence or absence of other dynamics.

Scholars of racial and ethnic politics have long studied the existence of a group linked-fate among African Americans (Dawson, 1994), Latinos (Stokes, 2003; Sanchez, 2006) and Asians (Junn and Masuoka, 2008) and what has been the role of group linked fate among each one of these groups on political attitudes and political participation. However, little is known about a shared group fate among religious group such as Muslim Americans. The findings in this paper suggest that connectedness to the Muslim American community has a strong positive and counteracting effect to a national backdrop of anti-Muslim sentiment. Thus, implying that American Muslims might also come to develop a notion of religious group linked fate. How such group linked-fate develops and what are its ramifications have yet to be investigated by scholars. Future work on American Muslims must continue to collect data on this community, despite hardships, and scholars of political behavior must also strive to theorize and develop novel frameworks of understanding how this important group is incorporating politically in the U.S.

Overall the findings suggest that Muslim Americans are motivated to engage in politics and are likely to vote more Democratic when they experience social connectedness to the Muslim American community. Though our findings primarily rely on data from

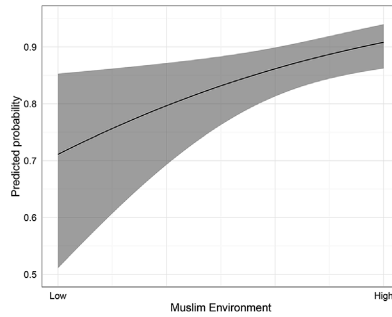



**Note: Dots indicate the change in predicted probability of voting Democrat when moving each variable form its min to its max.*
*The lines mark the uncertainty of the change in the predicted probability with 95% c.i.*
*Substantive effects of Muslim Variables model, as shown on table 2, model 2.*

**Fig. 4.** Change in predicted probability of voting Democrat among Muslim Americans.

MAPOS, which was collected in 2008, we believe that they have broad and important implications given the sociopolitical context that surrounds U.S. Muslims today. Compared to 2008, the current context is characterized by an even stronger anti-Muslim sentiment which scholars argue possess the strongest risk to the wellbeing of the Muslim American community (Calfano et al., 2017). Not only was the 2016 Presidential election marked by Islamophobia but the current administration has already acted against Muslim Americans by putting forth executive orders that ban the travel of Muslims into the United States. We suspect that continued levels of anti-Muslim sentiment mean that Muslim Americans will have to rely even more on their community and group-level factors to develop political and social capital in order to engage in politics. In other words, now more than ever, U.S. Muslims are likely to rely on their own community to develop a positive sense of belonging and overcome the negative consequences of political and social discrimination that they encounter on a daily basis.

Moreover, the increasing antagonism towards Muslim Americans primarily coming from Republican candidates and elected officials alike is likely to continue to drive an even stronger affinity between U.S. Muslims the Democratic party. As the results suggest, Muslims who have a stronger sense of social and religious belonging to the Muslim American community are more likely to vote Democrat. This is probably because they understand that policies adopted by the Republican administration of the time were harmful to the community that they had that strong connection to. Estimates from a survey conducted by the Council on American-




*Note: Solid line indicates the predicted probability of Democratic vote as a function of degree of Muslim environment. All other covariates are held at their means. Shaded regions mark the uncertainty of the predicted probability with 95% c.i. Substantive effect of Muslim environment variable, as shown on table 2, model 3.*

**Fig. 5.** Predicted probability of Democratic vote by degree of Muslim environment.

Islamic Relations in October of 2016 indicated that approximately 72% of Muslims intended to support Clinton and only 3% reported a preference for Trump. Results from the 2017 American Muslim Poll by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU)[15] suggest that only 15% of U.S. Muslims favored a win for Donald Trump. These recent figures in contrast with Findley's (2001) report that in 2000 approximately 72% of Muslim Americans supported Bush coupled with our findings here suggest that there is a steady shift of U.S. Muslim voters towards the Democratic party. This shift, however, has been primarily driven by the exclusionary and hostile policies coming from Republican candidates and electeds. In other words, if the Democratic party aims to fully incorporate this growing and important group of voters into their coalition they cannot take their vote granted without genuinely engaging and doing outreach to the members of this community.

## Appendix A. Descriptive statistics

| | Mean | St. Dev. | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Demographics** | | | | |
| 18–29 years old | 0.33 | 0.47 | 0 | 1 |
| 30–44 years old | 0.39 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| 45–65 years old | 0.19 | 0.39 | 0 | 1 |
| Above 65 years old | 0.01 | 0.11 | 0 | 1 |
| Arab | 0.40 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| Asian | 0.29 | 0.45 | 0 | 1 |
| Black | 0.15 | 0.36 | 0 | 1 |
| Other race | 0.06 | 0.24 | 0 | 1 |
| U.S. citizen | 0.68 | 0.47 | 0 | 1 |
| Foreign born | 0.57 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| **Partisanship** | | | | |
| Democrat | 0.49 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 |
| Republican | 0.06 | 0.23 | 0 | 1 |
| Independent | 0.12 | 0.32 | 0 | 1 |
| No PID | 0.25 | 0.43 | 0 | 1 |
| Ideology | 2.75 | 1.02 | 1 | 5 |
| **Socioeconomic Status** | | | | |
| $20,000 or less | 0.13 | 0.34 | 0 | 1 |
| $20,000 – $39,000 | 0.18 | 0.38 | 0 | 1 |
| $40,000 – $59,000 | 0.20 | 0.40 | 0 | 1 |
| $60,000 – $79,000 | 0.15 | 0.35 | 0 | 1 |
| $80,000 – $100,000 | 0.14 | 0.35 | 0 | 1 |
| $100,000 or more | 0.20 | 0.40 | 0 | 1 |
| Homeowner | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 |
| **Religious Variables** | | | | |
| Sunni | 0.68 | 0.47 | 0 | 1 |
| Shia | 0.07 | 0.25 | 0 | 1 |

[15] http://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/American-Muslim-Poll-2017-Report.pdf.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mosque involvement | 2.78 | 0.96 | 1 | 4 |
| Quran guidance | 3.39 | 0.70 | 1 | 4 |
| Follow Islam | 1.50 | 0.66 | 0 | 2 |
| Airport discrimination | 0.76 | 0.43 | 0 | 1 |
| Muslim neighbors | 0.71 | 0.45 | 0 | 1 |

*Note: Summary statistics of key variables in 2007–08 Muslim American Public Opinion Survey (MAPOS) (N = 1410).

## Appendix B. Methodological Note on the Religiosity of the Sample

Given that the MAPOS sample is drawn – in part – from religious centers and community festivals, the reader may question if there is any inherent bias. We are confident in the sample selection for two specific reasons. First, the MAPOS sample still demonstrates a range of religious diversity. While attending the mosque and the prayer of Eid are descriptively religious practices, they are also cultural and social practices, just as attending Sunday church services or Christmas mass are both religious and cultural events for Christian Americans. In response to a question about the importance of religion in their daily life, 50% stated religion was very important, 38% stated it was somewhat important, and 12% stated not too important. Likewise, when asked how involved they were with their local mosque, 26% said very active, 40% said somewhat, 20% said not much, and 13% said not at all active. Given the variation on these two key variables, we are quite confident that this sample provides the appropriate mix of religiously oriented Muslims, and at the same time providing a spectrum of religiosity that ranges from very low to very high.

The survey also included questions to assess how closely respondents practiced or followed Islam. For example, respondents were asked to select which option is *not* a month in the Islamic calendar: Rabi al-thalith; Rajab; Shawwal; Sha'ban and 79% correctly identified Rabi al-thalith, but 21% wrongly selected another option. Respondents were also asked whether they participated in Sadakah to an individual or organization in the past year, which is voluntary charity giving, and considered as proof of one's faith. Overall 69% of the sample said they had given Sadakah and 31% did not. So, across a variety of measures, the data point to a well-balanced and diverse sample of American Muslims, and not a sample that is skewed too heavily religious.

Table B
Religious characteristics of MAPOS sample.

| | |
|---|---|
| Religion very important | 50% |
| Religion somewhat important | 38% |
| Religion not too important | 12% |
| Very active in mosque | 26% |
| Somewhat active in mosque | 40% |
| Not too active in mosque | 20% |
| Not at all active in mosque | 13% |
| Correctly identifies Islamic months | 89% |
| Incorrectly identifies Islamic months | 11% |
| Participated in Sadakah | 69% |
| Did not participate in Sadakah | 31% |

Second, Muslims are a religious group by definition. Distinct from Hispanics which are considered an ethnic group, or African Americans who are a racial group, American Muslims are most commonly described as a religious group, and thus we can expect to encounter them in religious settings. Similar to American Jews, Muslims also express a wide spectrum in the observance of their religion from orthodox and especially devout, to those who are entirely secular but still consider themselves Muslim (or Jewish). At the point as which an individual completely de-identifies with their religion and does not consider themselves Muslim, we should not expect to find them in a scholarly dataset of Muslims. Rather, surveys and studies of communities from the Middle East, North Africa or South Asia may be more appropriate. But if we as scholars are interested in the public opinions and social attitudes and political behavior of Muslim Americans then we think it is wholly appropriate to focus on those who self-identify as Muslim, as per the MAPOS data.

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