Abstract

Muslim Americans and Symbolic Boundaries: A Trend Study

By

Hamza Ziglar

May 2023

Director of Thesis: Dr. Mamadi Corra

Department of Sociology

The Muslim American community is a unique social group that has had some research conducted on it, but not much has been done to assist this group with combatting discrimination and Islamophobia. The Pew Research Center has conducted Muslim American surveys from 2007-2017 in which they have shown a steady increase in the number of Muslims in America. These numbers show that the Muslim American population has increased from 2.35 million in 2007 to 2.75 million in 2011 to 3.45 million in 2017. In this study, I seek to create a linear profile of the members of the Muslim American community by applying the theory of symbolic boundaries as well as identifying and explaining three main themes. First, I examine religious attitudinal values: religious identity vs national identity, importance of religion, views on wearing the hijab, and belief in a meritocracy in the United States. Second, I examine religious adherence values; mosque attendance and daily prayer. Third, I examine core social attitudinal values; interpretation of the teaching of Islam, perception of the role of immigrants in American society, and potential conflicts between Islam and modern society. Furthermore, I seek to identify if Muslim Americans possess a higher religious identity than national identity, whether or not Muslim Americans will abandon the rituals and beliefs of their religion in order to fit into American society, and if national identity will waver depending on the national / political climate during each survey year.

Muslim Americans and Symbolic Boundaries: A Trend Study

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Department of Sociology

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Sociology

by

Hamza Ziglar

May 2023

Muslim Americans and Symbolic Boundaries: A Trend Study

by

Hamza Ziglar

Approved By:

Director of Thesis_____(Mamadi Corra, PhD)

Committee Member_____(Susan Pearce, PhD)

Committee Member_____(Colin Campbell, PhD)

Committee Member_____(Mary Nyangweso, PhD)

Chair of the Department_____(Kristen Myers, PhD)

Dean of the Graduate School_____(Kathleen Cox, PhD)

Dedication

To my cohort, thank you for the constant support and guidance throughout this entire process. Thank you for the knowledge and wisdom that you have bestowed upon me as I was able to grow personally and professionally within this department. I am truly humbled and honored to have been able to work alongside you all.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

TABLES

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Today, Muslim Americans constitute a growing and increasingly visible component of the U.S. population. The proportion of Muslim Americans has grown and continues to grow at a rapid pace. According to Pew Research Center surveys, the population of Muslim Americans has risen from approximately 2.35 million in 2007 to 2.75 million in 2011 to 3.45 million in 2017 (Pew 2021). In 2018, the Pew Research Center predicted that by 2040, the Muslim population in the U.S. would surpass the Jewish community and become the second-largest religious group second to that of Christianity. In addition, the Pew Research Center predicted that by 2050 the Muslim population would increase to 8.1 million. This increase would result in the Muslim population becoming 2.1% of the U.S. population (Pew 2018).

The Muslim American population is unique in that it is seen as foreign in terms of religion and racial/ethnic make-up. Muslim Americans are arguably the most diverse religious group with differences that lie across race, ethnicity, gender, norms about sexual orientation, country of origin, and immigration histories. They also exist among various cultural identities and experiences (Wang et. al. 2020). The Muslim American community as a whole is mainly comprised of immigrants and their children and have arrived from all over the world (Pew 2017). According to Gould & Klor (2014), of the Muslim immigrants, 71% arrived in the United States after 1990. This was in response to the repealing of the 1965 country-based immigration quotas (Gould & Klor 2014). Following survey reports from the Pew Research Center, 30% of Muslim immigrants have arrived since 2010, 26% from 2000-2009, 19% in the 1990s, 10% in the 1980s, 6% in the 1970s, and 2% prior to 1970 (Pew 2017). When broken down by region, the majority of the Muslim immigrants come from South Asia (35%), Middle East/North Africa (25%), and Asia-Pacific (23%) (Pew 2017).

Immigrants are not new or unique to the United States, so why is it that the Muslim American population stands out? Misrepresentations of the Muslim American population and the religion of Islam as a whole continue to place a barrier between them and the rest of the U.S. population. The Muslim American community is often suspected of endorsing values and ideals that are seen as incompatible with American society. They are often accused of possessing negative characteristics such as being unpatriotic, disloyal, and distrusting of the U.S. (Saleem et. al. 2019; DelReal 2016; Howell 2015). When polled by the Pew Research Center, approximately half of Americans believe that Muslim Americans wish to remain distinct from American Culture (Pew 2011). Americans also believe that "some" Muslim Americans are in fact anti-American (Pew 2016). This shift in the perceptions of Muslim Americans and their perceived lack of integration started in 2002 and have been increasing (Pew 2002). And it further became prominent in the 2016 presidential election.

Minority groups dealing with stigma is not a new concept in the United States. However, the Muslim American community is not necessarily stigmatized because of their race or ethnicity, although cases of this do certainly exist, but they are openly discriminated against because of their religion. Muslim identity in itself has become a highly stigmatized concept in the U.S. Negative perceptions and connotations have led many to stigmatize and discriminate against Muslim Americans (Casey 2017). "The American experience forges as well as forces a new Muslim identity that is born out of both the quest to belong and the experience of being permanently depicted as "the other"" (Haddad 2000: 29). Therefore, Muslim Americans must come to terms with being depicted as foreign or as an outsider not fully capable of assimilating and/or integrating into American culture.

As a social group and community, Muslim Americans collectively experience the concept of Islamophobia. Islamophobia refers to the anti-Muslim sentiments that are produced by interpersonal and structural forms of prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, and violence (Runnymede Trust 1997; Wang et. al. 2020). Islamophobia is primarily encountered in Western and secular countries. In these areas, Muslims are perceived as foreigners who are incapable of assimilation and who do not belong in the country that they reside (Laird, Abu-Ras, & Senzai 2013; Wang et. al. 2020). For this reason, Muslims, primarily in countries like the U.S., the United Kingdom, and France, experience xenophobic and racist sentiments that consistently distinguish them as perpetual outsiders (Wang et. al. 2020). The combining factors of being perceived as outsiders along with the unfair discrimination has historically illustrated the difficulties in identity development for young Muslim Americans (Kunst, Tajamal, Sam, & Ulleberg 2012; Sirin & Fine 2007; Wang et. al. 2020). For example, approximately 40% of Muslim Americans between 18 and 25 years of age have stated that their dual identities of Muslim and American are separate or in conflict (Sirina et. al. 2008).

With their increased visibility, a question that immediately comes to mind is how Muslim Americans fit in the attitudinal and value landscape of American society? Do they have goals, aspirations, and outlooks that markedly differ from those held by the overall U.S. population? For this thesis, I propose to investigate the effect that symbolic boundaries have on Muslim Americans. I examine their sense of religious affiliation in contrast to their sense of national identity. I conduct this examination by investigating their responses to surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2007, 2011, and 2017. The values that I examine are their perception of self-identification of American first or Muslim first, their perceived importance of religion, the wearing of the headscarf (hijab) for Muslim women, and their perceived value of meritocracy. In

addition, I illustrate the importance of mosque attendance and adherence to prayer (which are both viewed as religious tenets in Islam) in order to demonstrate an elevated sense of religious identity among Muslim Americans. Furthermore, I examine current core social issues in the United States (more than one way to interpret scripture, which gender is better suited for political leadership, conflict between religion and modernity) in order to gain a better understanding of this increasingly visible group.

In summary, Section I introduced the audience to the topic of this thesis paper. Section II introduced the concept of "symbolic boundaries" and how it helps us to understand Muslim Americans. Hypotheses for the thesis are drawn from this discussion. In Section III, I provide a literature review in which I discuss previous material on the topic of Muslim Americans and symbolic boundaries. In Section IV, I provide the data and methods section in which I discuss my use of the 2007, 2011, and 2017 datasets as provided by surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center. I discuss my usage of logistic regression along with tables and figures utilized to summarize my data as it relates to Muslim Americans. In Section V, I discuss the results of my findings from the data. In Section VI, I discuss what the data means in reference to the focal points of this study. In Section VII, I provide the conclusion to this study with limitations and advice for future studies.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Symbolic Boundaries

The concept of symbolic boundaries is defined by Michele Lamont and Virag Molnar (2002) as "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality" (Lamont & Molnar 2002:168). In addition, "symbolic boundaries also separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership" (Lamont & Molnar 2002:168; Epstein 1992). For this thesis, I focus on the concept of symbolic boundaries and how this concept relates to religion and the Muslim American community in particular.

The concept of boundaries as well as borders have been, in recent years, at the forefront of social science research. Social scientists have studied these concepts in conjunction with research on such topics as "cognition, social and collective identity, commensuration, census categories, cultural capital, cultural membership, racial and ethnic group positioning, hegemonic masculinity, professional jurisdictions, scientific controversies, group rights, immigration, and contentious politics" (Lamont & Molnar 2002:167). Therefore, the boundaries act as a representation of "symbolic categorizations that define the criteria of belonging and distinguish between 'us' and 'them'" (Trittler 2017:710).

Social scientists focus on the relationship between in-groups and out-groups. This provides for a unique situation for Muslim Americans. Muslim Americans possess a very diverse ethnic composition of members. Each ethnic group under the umbrella of Muslim American may have differing experiences than the others. As a group, Muslim Americans face obstacles to

obtaining full assimilation into American society. First, by being part of the religion of Islam, they are an out-group in reference to the in-group of Christianity. Second, although there is no majority ethnic group within the Muslim American community, as a whole they are considered an out-group because they are not part of the Anglo-Saxon in-group. Third, they face stigmatization which does not allow them to fully assimilate.

When examining boundaries set on a religious basis, Trittler (2017) states that there can be different meanings. “Religion can be used as a boundary marker for religious and cultural identities, wherein people differentiate between belonging to different denominations or religions” (Trittler 2017:711). For the focus of the current study, this could mean distinctions between Christians and Muslims; or historically, as Catholics vs Protestants. Trittler goes on to state that “religion as a belief system can also relate to a specific set of values and norms, such as charity, freedom, and tolerance that are seen as the fundamental basis of integration and solidarity within society” (2017:711).

Symbolic boundaries exist between Christians and Muslims as Christians maintain the majority role in America and Muslims consist of a small minority of the population. Based on a 2006 survey by the Pew Research Center, two-thirds of American adults claimed that they believe the United States is a Christian Nation (Pew Research Center 2006; Straughn & Feld 2010). Similarly, nearly one-third of American adults claim that the United States is basically still a Christian society (Straughn & Feld 2010; Wuthnow 2005). Straughn & Feld (2010) state that “rather than merely describing the demographic status quo, statements like ‘America as a Christian Nation’ represent a discursive practice that seeks to align the boundaries of authentic national belonging with adherence to the dominant religious faith” (P. 281). In the U.S., the dominant religion is Christianity, as a whole, which automatically places the Muslim American

community into an "outsider" role. Will Herberg (1955) in his work, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, stated that the religious history of America "has been numerically and culturally dominated by a distinct spectrum of denominations belonging to "Protestant-Catholic-Jew" triad" (Fuller 1995:498; Herberg 1955). Therefore, with respect to Christianity, any group that can be classified as non-Christian to include religious "nones" are placed into the out-groups and Christianity is the in-group. Christian America controls the power and privileges and creates inequalities for the out-groups.

Prominent sociologists such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber studied the concept of religion. Durkheim focused more on the distinctions between the sacred and the profane and how each idea dictated a person's life. Durkheim claimed that religious systems created the concept of a cosmology in which society was able to interpret how the world was organized and how certain elements were then organized to create a hierarchy. These beliefs influence the way that people live their lives. It demonstrated to what extent these beliefs limit and facilitate a person's action (Lamont 2015).

Max Weber took a different perspective. Weber focused on the social inequalities that are created by these symbolic boundaries rather than the concept of social solidarity. He claimed that mankind is always in a continuous struggle over seemingly scarce resources. Since humans are in a constant state of competition, they decide to discriminate against out-groups or minority groups. They do so by cultural discrimination in which they attack cultural characteristics such as lifestyle, language, education, race, and/or as the focal point of this study, religion. When a majority group chooses to discriminate against a minority group(s), they formulate status groups who gain superiority over the minority group(s). The majority group then creates a

monopolization of resources, causing a strong impact on a person's social position and their perceived access to available resources (Lamont 2015).

Yet, in his book, "One Nation Under God", historian Kevin Kruse argues that the concept of "Christian America" is nothing more than a myth. Not only does he argue that it is a myth, but he also argues that it is a fairly recent myth. Kruse dates the conception of this myth to the 1930s. At this moment in history, he describes a coalition of businessmen and religious leaders aligned to resist FDR's New Deal. Looking forward to the 1950s, President Eisenhower lent his full support to the activists and the Religious Right which resulted in a huge increase in church membership. Shortly after, Congress added "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance as well as making "In God We Trust" the national motto. It was at this time that the United States became a religious nation. It was these important events in American history that, mixed with money, religion, and politics to create the myth of "Christian America". This myth continues to define as well as divide American politics at present. (Kruse, 2015)

Myth or not, this view nevertheless continues to define as well as divide American politics at present (Kruse 2015). Despite America being a pluralist country and one that has high regard for freedom of religion, history has illustrated that religious minorities continue to be marginalized and excluded. This has been on-going since the country's founding. Politics often has a heavy hand in how groups are treated. This was very evident in elections between Obama, Clinton, and Trump. Cultural and social changes have occurred throughout the country in ways that have left some to wonder if this is effectively the "end of white Christian America" (Jones 2016; Braunstein 2017). With the rise in global terrorism to include the attacks on September 11th, it has provoked questions on whether or not Muslims can truly be considered American and if they pose a threat to American culture and national security (Braunstein 2017). At this time,

Obama and Hillary Clinton were trying to bring about religious tolerance and multicultural inclusion to combat Trump's exclusionary rhetoric. Meanwhile, Trump's victory in 2016 in essence became a symbolic victory for those who sought to define Muslims as outsiders, enemies, and others (Braunstein 2017).

By contrast, some have argued that the case we typically see with the United States is that it is a nation based on civic, rather than ethnic standards. In this sense, the boundaries of national belonging are defined by a set of voluntary civic values instead of ascriptive identities such as ethnic, racial, or religious group membership (Braunstein 2017). A civic conception in reference to nationalism would imply that anyone can join a nation without restrictions on birthplace or ethnic origins. However, the reality of adaptation can vary. With civic nationalism we do not see "a myth of common ancestry" as is present in ethnic nationalism (Keating 1996; Braunstein 2017). Although Muslims from every background are welcome under civic nationalism, their adaptation can vary and has typically shown to come at a higher cost. From a normative perspective, civic nationalism is viewed as positive and ethnic nationalism is viewed as negative (Brubaker 1999; Braunstein 2017).

Another key factor that hinders the successful assimilation of Muslim Americans is the representation that they get from politicians and the media. There are various organizations that continue to fight for and against this community. Muslim advocacy organizations continuously fight to eliminate the violent stigma that has been attached to their religion. In opposition, there are various interest groups and think tanks that are concerned about the treatment of women in Muslim majority countries; evangelical Christian groups who are seemingly convinced that Muslims are plotting to overthrow the U.S. government in secret; interfaith groups that argue that terrorism is practiced by people belonging to all faiths; and even social movements who seek to

abolish the practice of Islam in the U.S (Bail 2012). “Together, these organizations are struggling to shift the symbolic boundaries Americans use to differentiate ‘us’ from ‘them’ (Bail 2012:856; Douglas 1966; Lamont 2000; Wimmer 2008).

Logically, if society is going to have an “us” then there will always be a “them”. Drawing on national identity, “them” is typically used to define a nation or a people. However, the U.S. is a nation built on immigration that draws its population from all over the globe. Immigrants that are viewed as foreigners or outsiders can become citizens. Historically, some racial, ethnic, and religious groups are able to transform from non-American to American with great ease. This is not yet true for the Muslim American community. Formally, individuals can become American and gain citizenship based on legal boundaries. The issue that is presented is when immigration and national belonging are judged according to symbolic boundaries placed between groups (Braunstein 2017; Lamont & Molnar 2002; Alexander 2006).

Frequently, communication about boundaries are vividly seen when discussion starts on race in America. Despite having social and legal prohibitions on racism, this has done little to deter public figures from drawing symbolic boundaries that categorize good/bad citizenship into white/non-white racial divide. Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues that people simply use “color-blind” language that grants deservedness and perceived worth according to liberal individualist standards that seemingly ignore the structural barriers to equality that many racial and ethnic minorities face in society (Braunstein 2017; Bonilla-Silva 2003). This type of language blurs the lines between civic and ethnic logics of citizenship in which substantive racial exclusions are thus justified using civic criteria alone (Braunstein 2017).

Recent political elections have demonstrated that some politicians often make the same mistake by using these types of rhetorical moves which results in religious exclusion. These public figures provide self-identified definitions of who is a good religious subject, and/or good American. They do so on the basis of individual authority and moral conscience as well as voluntaristic membership using Protestant norms that they have reconfigured as civic norms (Braunstein 2017; de Tocqueville 2003). This leads religious groups, like the Muslim American community to be viewed as non-white and foreign, thus increasing their perceived "deviance" from white Protestant norms (Braunstein 2017; Williams 2013).

Symbolic boundaries are usually applied to fields of sociology such as the sociology of culture and in various aspects of social inequality. However, Tranby and Zulkowski (2012) argue that symbolic boundaries can be effectively applied to the sociology of religion. In their work, they present three reasons why this can be the case. The first reason they give is the concept that "religious communities, beliefs and practices provide traditions, narratives, ideas, symbols and metaphors that are used as cultural tools for understanding and interacting with the broader world" (Tranby & Zulkowski 2012:872; Olson 2011). Thus, religious communities may frame certain aspects of inequality based on different cultural tools. The second reason they produce is based on the work of Emile Durkheim in which he states that a core function of religion is to "unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to" the beliefs and practices of the religion (Durkheim 1912). In this manner, the religious beliefs and rituals that a group adheres to help build a religious community in which they integrate the members based on shared beliefs and rituals. This also allows for the group to define as outsiders those who do not share the beliefs and rituals of the group. The third reason they produce is that "religion shapes

ideas about cultural membership because it draws particularly sharp group-based boundaries around cultural categories of worth" (Tranby & Zulkowski 2012:872).

Therefore, it is logical to assume that the Muslim American community will have a difficult time with fully assimilating into American society. They are consistently viewed as outsiders or as the "them" which is likely to hinder their ability to find their niche within society. The Muslim Community, as with all groups, has to maintain their own identity and how they fit into society. This leads to whether Muslim Americans strive to maintain an American identity while shedding their Muslim identity, striving to maintain their Muslim identity while shedding aspects of an American identity, or struggling to find a balance between the two. In this respect, Muslim Americans must choose to either assimilate or integrate into American society. Effectively, assimilation is "the process by which different cultural groups become more and more alike" (Cole 2018). In contrast, integration is the process by which "a person or group is encouraged to maintain their original culture while they are simultaneously encouraged to adopt necessary elements of the new culture in order to live a full and functional life in their new home" (Cole 2018). Social scientists have begun to believe that integration is more conducive to the incorporation of immigrants and minority groups into any given society instead of assimilation (Cole 2018). The next section outlines specific hypotheses drawn from this discussion.

Hypotheses

H_1: Among Muslim Americans, religious identity will be more salient than national identity.

H_2: Muslim Americans will not abandon the beliefs and rituals of their religion in order to fully assimilate into American society.

H_3: Among Muslim Americans, national identity will waver depending on the national / political climate during each survey year.

CHAPTER III. DATA, METHODS, AND SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

For this study, I utilized three datasets from surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center. The three datasets are from the years 2007, 2011, and 2017. All three surveys were solely conducted on Muslim American participants. The 2007 Muslim American survey contained 1,050 respondents. The 2011 Muslim American survey contained 1,033 respondents. The 2017 Muslim American survey contained 1,001 respondents. The interviews were conducted over the phone and interviewers asked for either the youngest male or the youngest female who were 18 years or older. If a respondent answered 'no' to being a Muslim the interview was concluded at that point. The interviewers asked respondents various attitudinal questions that covered various topics about their lives in the United States.

Dependent Variables

For my outcome measures, I examined four variables related to religious attitudes. My first dependent variable captures Muslim identity vs national identity. Specifically, respondents were asked, "Do you think of yourself first as an American or first as a Muslim?" Respondents were then given the possible responses of "American", "Muslim", "Both", and "Neither/Other." My second dependent variable captures the importance of religion in one's life. Respondents were asked, "How important is religion in your life – very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?" My third dependent variable focuses on views of wearing the hijab for Muslim American women, and this question was only asked of women. Female respondents were asked, "When you are out in public, how often do you wear the headcover or hijab? Do you wear it all the time, most of the time, only some of the time, or never?" My final dependent variable measures belief in the concept of meritocracy in the United States. Respondents were asked, "Here are a few pairs of statements. For each pair, tell me whether the

FIRST or the SECOND statement comes closer to your views – even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is, 1. Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard. 2. Hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people."

Table 1 demonstrates a comparison of the three datasets conducted by the Pew Research Center based on the responses of Muslim American participants. The table shows the sample size of each dataset. It also lists the dependent variables with how they are coded in parenthesis. The variable for national / religious identity was asked in the 2007 and 2011 datasets, but not asked in the 2017 dataset. Due to the fact that I am using three datasets for this study, the variables were recoded in each dataset and the datasets were appended. Doing so combined the three datasets and accounted for a combined 3,084 respondents.

As proxy measures, I examined mosque attendance and adherence to the daily prayers in order to measure commitment to religious identity. In addition, I examined core social attitudinal responses by using the responses for variables such as whether there is room for interpretation of Islam and viewpoints on conflicts between religion and modernity as well as a perception of the role of immigrants in the United States.

In addition, I use various basic demographic characteristics such as survey year, race, gender, religious sect, political ideology, education, and birthplace. The variable for survey year provides response categories of 2007, 2011, and 2017. The variable for race provides response categories of "white", "black", "Asian", and "Other". The variable for gender provides response categories of "male" and "female." The variable for religious sect provides response categories of "Sunni", "Shi'a", and "Other/Non-Specified." The variable for political ideology provides response categories of "conservative", "moderate", and "liberal." The variable for education provides response variables of "HS or less", "some college", and "graduate." The variable for

respondent's birthplace provides response categories of "USA", "Arab region", "South Asia", "Other", and "Africa."

Independent Variables

Table 2 demonstrates the independent variables that I use for this study. In the second column, I list the questions as they were proposed in the questionnaire. I list how I recoded each variable for the purpose of this study. I omitted responses of 'I don't know' and 'Refused to Answer'. When accounting for race / ethnicity, I recoded the variable by only focusing on 'white' 'black' and 'Asian'. Any responses for 'Hispanic' or 'Other' were combined as 'Other'. When accounting for the education variable, I recoded the variable to combine response categories. This allowed me to keep the response categories the same over all three datasets. When accounting for the respondent's birthplace, I recoded the variable by combining or changing the response categories. In the datasets, the data provided a response category of either 'Europe' or 'Other'. To keep the response categories the same across all three datasets, I recoded that response category as 'other'.

Methods

I run multivariable regression models for each dependent variable. Specifically, I run a multinomial logistic regression for religious identity / national identity, ordinal logistic regression for 'importance of religion' and 'adherence to hijab', and logistic regression for 'perception of meritocracy' due to the variable being dichotomous. I include all independent variables in each regression model. For each regression model, with the exception of the multinomial logistic regression, I present coefficients as odds ratios.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

Univariate Statistics

Table 3 illustrates descriptive statistics for the independent variables for all three datasets. Looking at race and ethnicity the percentage of white respondents and Asian respondents are nearly equal. Respondents who identify as 'white' can fall under various ethnic backgrounds. For purposes of the Census, Arab Americans are seen as 'white'. For respondents who identify as Asian, the vast majority come from South Asia. This is not surprising as studies show and, as mentioned above, the majority of Muslim immigrants to the United States are from South Asia. Looking at gender, 56.5% (1,743) of respondents are male and 43.5% (1,341) of respondents are female. When looking at religious sects, Islam consists of two main sects, Sunni and Shi'a. For these surveys, most respondents identify as Sunni (64%; 1,885) with those identifying as 'other / non-specific' (20.3%; 594) being higher than Shi'a. This is not surprising as Sunni is the majority group in terms of religious sect. It is also not surprising that those identifying as neither Sunni nor Shi'a would be as high as it is. This is seen in the percentage of Muslims today who do not wish to identify as one or the other, but wish to identify solely as a Muslim without labels.

When examining the political ideology of respondents, the majority of respondents fall in the moderate category. 49.2% of respondents self-identify as moderate while 30.9% self-identify as liberal and 19.9% self-identify as conservative. On the basis of educational attainment, 51.4% of respondents are college graduates consisting of respondents who have either a bachelor's degree or a graduate degree. Of respondents, 27.3% have either a high school diploma or have not yet graduated from high school and 21.3% have completed some college having yet to graduate with their degree. On the basis of respondent's birthplace, most respondents are from three main regions, the United States (30.8%), South Asia (29.6%), and Arab regions (24.9%.

This falls in line with the fact that the majority of respondents on the basis of race / ethnicity were either ‘white’ or ‘Asian’.

Bivariate Statistics

Chart 1 illustrates a basic temporal change in the belief of national identity and religious identity based on each dataset. It is important to remember that this particular variable was only asked in the 2007 and 2011 datasets. Based on the data, the percentage of respondents who view themselves as American first increased from 29.9% in 2011 to 31.5% in 2011. The percentage of respondents who view themselves as Muslim first increased from 46.9% in 2007 to 48.2% in 2011. The percentage of respondents who identify as both American and Muslim decreased from 23.2% in 2007 to 20.4% in 2011.

Chart 2 illustrates a basic temporal change in the importance of religion based on each dataset. The data for this variable was recorded in all three datasets. As illustrated in the chart, the majority of respondents claimed that religion was very important in their lives. There is a slight increase in respondents who view religion as very important in their lives from 2007 (69.2%) to 2011 (70.6%) with a decrease in 2017 to 67.5%. The percentage of respondents who feel that religion is somewhat important in their lives slightly dips over time from 22.2% in 2007 to 21.6% in 2011 and then slightly increases to 22.7% in 2017. We see a slight increase in the amount of respondents who feel religion is not too important in their lives from 4.7% in 2007 to 5.5% in 2011 and then an increase up to 6.8% in 2017. Those that feel that religion is not at all important in their lives decreases from 4% in 2007 to 2.5% in 2011 and then slightly increases back to 3% in 2017.

Chart 3 illustrates a basic temporal change in the view of wearing the hijab for female Muslim Americans. The data for this variable was recorded in all three datasets. As illustrated in

the chart, the majority of respondents either always wear the hijab or never wear the hijab. As we progress through the years, the number of respondents who wear the hijab decreases from 36.4% in 2007 to 34.4% in 2011 and 40.4% in 2017. By comparison, as we progress through the years, the number of respondents who claim to never wear the hijab also decreases from 45% in 2007 to 41.9% in 2011 and 39.6% in 2017. This shows a balance over time between those that always wear the hijab and those that never wear the hijab. Those that mostly wear the hijab stay about equal from 2007 (5.7%) to 2011 (6.2%) and 2017 (5%). Those that sometimes wear the hijab increased from 12.9% in 2007 to 17.4% in 2011 before decreasing to 15.1% in 2017.

Chart 4 illustrates a basic temporal change in the views of perceived meritocracy in the United States. The data for this variable was recorded in all three datasets. As illustrated in the chart, the majority of respondents believe that a meritocratic system does exist in the United States. The number of respondents who believe in a meritocracy increased from 70.4% in 2007 to 75.6% in 2011. In 2017, the number of respondents who believe that a system of meritocracy exists decreased to 69.9%. In comparison, the number of respondents who do not believe that a system of meritocracy exists in the United States slightly decreased from 25.5% in 2007 to 24.4% in 2011. In 2017, this number increased to 30.1%.

Chart 5 illustrates a basic temporal change in the views of mosque attendance in the United States. The data for this variable was recorded in all three datasets. As illustrated in the chart, the majority of respondents in each survey year typically attend the Islamic Center or mosque for Jumu'ah prayer. In 2007, 24.7% of respondents claimed to go to the mosque once a week for Jumu'ah prayer. In 2011, this category of respondents increased to 29%. In 2017, this number decreased very slightly to 28.1%. Interesting to note is that in 2007, 17.8% of respondents claimed to never go to the mosque. This is the highest percentage of respondents

over all three datasets for this particular response category. This number dropped significantly in 2011 to 12.6%. In 2017, we see the number climb slightly to 14%.

Chart 6 illustrates a basic temporal change in views of daily prayer adherence among Muslim Americans. The data for this variable was recorded in all three datasets. As illustrated in the chart, the majority of respondents claimed to perform all five daily prayers. In 2007, 41.4% of respondents claimed to perform all five daily prayers compared to 46.9% in 2011 and 42.8% in 2017. The number of respondents who claimed to either pray some of the prayers or occasionally perform the daily prayers stayed consistent until 2017 when the number of respondents who performed some of the prayers (19.6%) fell below the number of respondents who occasionally perform the prayers (21.2%). The number of respondents who never pray decreased from 2007 (12.3%) to 8.5% in 2011 before increasing slightly to 10.7% in 2017.

Chart 7 illustrates a basic temporal change in views of interpretation of the teachings of Islam. The data for this variable was recorded in all three datasets. As illustrated in the chart, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they believe that there is more than one way to interpret the teachings of Islam. In 2007, 65.7% of respondents believed in multiple interpretations of Islam compared to 63% in 2011 and 69.1% in 2017. In comparison, 34.3% of respondents in 2007 believed that there was only one way to interpret the teachings of Islam. In 2011, this number increased to 37%. In 2017, this number decreased to 30.9%.

Chart 8 illustrates a basic temporal change in views on the role of immigrants in the United States. The data for this variable was recorded in all three datasets. As illustrated in the chart, the vast majority of respondents believe that immigrants strengthen the United States. Overwhelmingly, 85.4% of respondents in 2007 believed that immigrants strengthened the United States compared to 83.2% in 2011 and 91.6% in 2017. In comparison, 14.6% of

respondents in 2007 claimed that immigrants burden the United States. In 2011, this number rose slightly to 16.8%. In 2017, this number dropped drastically to 8.4%.

Chart 9 illustrates a basic temporal change in views of conflict between Islam and modern society. The data for this variable was only recorded in 2007 and 2011. As illustrated in the chart, the vast majority of respondents believe that there is no conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in modern society. The percentage of respondents who believe there is no conflict between the two stayed relatively equal across the survey years with 74.5% in 2007, 72.3% in 2011, and 73.4% in 2017. In comparison, 25.5% of respondents in 2007 believed that there is a conflict with being a devout Muslim and living in modern society compared to 27.7% in 2011 and 26.6% in 2017.

Graph 1 illustrates a plot graph showing a correlation between race / ethnicity and the predicted probability of religion being very important in one's life. As illustrated in the graph, respondents who identify as black have the highest probability (.78) of religion being very important in their lives. White respondents have approximately a .635 probability of religion being very important in their lives. Asian respondents have approximately a .68 probability of religion being very important in their lives.

Graph 2 illustrates the predicted probability of identifying as American first in relation to the respondent's race / ethnicity. As illustrated in the graph, white respondents have a .36 chance to identify as American first. Black respondents have a .29 chance to identify as American first. Asian respondents have a .34 chance of identifying as American first.

Graph 3 illustrates the predicted probability of a respondent never wearing the hijab based on the survey year. As the graph illustrates, there is general decline over time of the predicted probability of a respondent never wearing the hijab. In 2007, there is a .48 chance that

respondents will never wear the hijab. In 2011, the chance decreased to approximately .46. In 2017, the chance of a respondent never wearing the hijab decreased to approximately a .41 chance.

Graph 4 illustrates the predicted probability of a respondent's belief in meritocracy based on survey year. As illustrated in the graph, there is a .26 chance of belief in meritocracy. This chance decreased in 2011 to approximately .24. In 2017, this chance increased to approximately .29.

Regression Model 1 illustrates a multinomial logistic regression for the variable of identity. Respondents who view themselves as American first were the base outcome. Respondents who identified as Muslim first showed a -.003 change over the survey years with a p-value of .934. Respondents who identified as both Muslim & American equally showed a -.428 change over the survey years with a p-value of .236. On the basis of race / ethnicity, black respondents showed a .886 change over white respondents for identifying as Muslim first over American first with a p-value of 0.00. Female respondents showed a .524 change over male respondents for identifying as Muslim first over American first with a p-value of 0.00. On the basis of respondent's birthplace, respondents who were born in the Arab regions showed a .562 change over respondents born in the United States for identifying as Muslim first with a p-value of 0.004. Respondents who were born in South Asia showed a .198 change over respondents who were born in the United States for identifying as Muslim first with a p-value of .382.

Regression Model 2 illustrates an ordered logistic regression for the variable of importance of religion in each respondent's life. For this regression model, I used odds ratios to more accurately analyze the data. Survey year yields an odds ratio of 1.002 indicating slightly higher odds of an effect. On the basis of race / ethnicity, black respondents yielded an odds ratio

of .411 indicating a lower chance of an effect when compared to white respondents. Asian respondents yielded an odds ratio of .741 indicating a lower chance of an effect when compared to white respondents. Compared to male respondents, female respondents showed an odds ratio of .597 indicating a lower chance of having an effect. Compared to Sunni respondents, Shi'a respondents yielded an odds ratio of 3.25 which indicates a higher chance of having an effect. South Asian respondents yielded an odds ratio of 1.029 which indicates a slightly higher chance of having an effect on the variable in comparison with white respondents.

Regression Model 3 illustrates an order logistic regression for the variable of wearing the hijab. For this regression model, I used odds ratios to more accurately analyze the data. Survey year yielded an odds ratio of .967 which indicates a slightly lower chance of having an effect. Compared to Sunni respondents, Shi'a respondents showed an odds ratio of 3.84 indicating a higher chance of having an effect. Compared to respondents who possessed a high school diploma or less, those with a graduate degree showed an odds ratio of 1.90 indicating a higher chance of having an effect. Compared to respondents born in the United States, respondents born in the Arab regions showed an odds ratio of .795 indicating a lower chance of having an effect. Respondents born in South Asia showed an odds ratio of 1.54 indicating a higher chance of having an effect as compared to respondents born in the United States.

Regression Model 4 illustrates a logistic regression for the variable of perceived belief in a meritocracy. For this logistic regression, I used odds ratios to more accurately analyze the data. Survey year yielded an odds ratio of 1.015 which indicates a slightly higher chance of having an effect. Black respondents showed an odds ratio of 1.03 which indicates a slightly higher chance of having an effect compared to white respondents. Asian respondents showed an odds ratio of .671 which indicates a slightly lower chance of having an effect compared to white respondents.

On the basis of political ideology, respondents who identify as moderate showed an odds ratio of 1.037 which indicates a slightly higher chance of having an effect as compared to respondents who identified as conservative. Respondents who identified as liberal showed an odds ratio of 1.328 which indicates a higher chance of having an effect compared to respondents who identified as conservative.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to create a trend study of the belief patterns of the Muslim American community as it changes over the time period of 2007, 2011, and 2017. In doing so, I applied the concept of symbolic boundaries as they pertain to the Muslim American community. Symbolic boundaries have the potential to hinder the perceived success of Muslim Americans. In addition to the use of symbolic boundaries in my study, I also sought to build a profile of Muslim Americans by examining their belief patterns and social attitudes over the three time periods. I analyzed this by looking at three different themes which are: religious attitudinal values, religious adherence values, and core social attitudinal values.

My first theme was related to religious attitudinal values in which I analyzed religious identity vs national identity, the importance placed on religion in a respondent's life, views on wearing the hijab for female Muslims, and belief in a meritocratic system in the United States. It was clear from the datasets that overall, Muslim Americans placed more importance on religious identity than they did on national identity. This question was a vital focal point of the religious attitudinal values. It was unfortunate that this question was not asked or recorded in the 2017 survey, but we can still get a valuable sense of self-identity and using the data from the first two survey years, we can project what the levels would look like if we were to ask this question in 2017 and onward. It was important to look at the data and then see if current events or the political climate during the timeframe would have affected the survey results. In theory, a respondent's level of either national or religious identity would depend on the political climate during the time the survey was conducted. Therefore, the further we get from a major event like 9/11, the higher the national identity should become. The closer we get to a new event or

negative political climate such as the presidential election of Donald Trump, we should see a decrease in national identity and an increase in religious identity.

From looking at the data, it becomes clear that Muslim Americans overwhelmingly view themselves as Muslim first and American second. This indicates a higher level of religious identity than national identity. This isn't to say that Muslim Americans don't see themselves as both, but as the data indicates the number of respondents who self-identify as both are quite a bit lower. From survey year to survey year it is clear that religious identity continues to rise. With the Republicans leaving the White House after the 2007 survey year, we can project national identity to rise. With Democrats winning the presidency and assuming the White House, we can project that the national identity would continue to rise. The data shows a slight increase in national identity and religious identity. Though we cannot know for sure based on the datasets what the 2017 numbers would be, we can project that the Democrats leaving the White House and Donald Trump winning the presidency would result in numbers declining for the 2017 dataset. With the anti-Muslim rhetoric that Donald Trump was promoting and the possibility of a Muslim Ban, we can project that national identity and identifying as both would decline and religious identity would rise. There would be a trade-off between the data as respondents who once viewed themselves as American first or both would change their position and identify as Muslim first.

Furthermore, as the data indicate, Muslim Americans regardless of race / ethnicity believe that religion is very important in their lives. The data shows that religion is overwhelmingly important in the lives of Muslim Americans. Over the three survey years, there is no significant change in this belief pattern. Muslim Americans continue to remain a highly religious and spiritual group of people. According to Pew, over the three datasets, the percentage

of respondents who view religion as very important in their lives had only a slight decline from 72% in 2007 to 69% in 2011 and finally 65% in 2017.

Muslim Americans embrace both their Muslim identity and their American identity, but given that Muslim Americans, especially during Trump's era, feel discriminated against, that brings the hijab to the surface. The hijab is arguably one of the most known symbols of Islam in many countries. Due to this, many Muslim Americans may feel that they stand out in America. This would contribute to many female Muslims seemingly either wearing the hijab in defiance and solidarity with their religion or abandoning the hijab altogether. The data shows this very idea. Over the three survey years, female Muslims either wear the hijab always or they never wear it. In 2007 and 2011, more women claimed to never wear the hijab than those who claimed to always wear it. In 2017, we see a balancing out of the numbers of women who claimed to either wear it all the time or never wear it. Women who claim that religion is very important in their lives are expectedly more likely to wear the hijab all of the time while women who claim that religion is not very important in their lives are more likely to never wear the hijab.

Whether or not a person believes in a system of meritocracy in the United States, it would impact how they view the daily interactions of the country. There are people that believe that hard work will help you gain success and they typically will have a more positive outlook in life. There are also people who believe that no matter how hard you work, you will still not be able to effectively move up the socioeconomic ladder. Overwhelmingly, the respondents over all three survey years claimed that they believe that hard work pays off. Although, it is important to note that in 2017, there is a dip in the amount of respondents who believe that hard work pays off. This could be attributed to the Republican Party gaining control of the political climate with the election of Donald Trump. Trump's presidency resulted in a period of fear and isolation for the

Muslim American community. This would have a negative impact on their perception of meritocracy and upward mobility.

My second theme addressed the adherence of religious values among those in the Muslim American community. The Pew Research Center Muslim surveys addressed pillars of Islam; this being daily prayer (salah) and mosque attendance. Salah is a pillar of Islam and one that is not to be rejected. Thus, it was important to see if Muslim Americans continued to uphold this pillar as they sought to blend in with society. Although, whether or not one prays and the quantity of their prayers would have little burden on whether or not one can fit in with the host country. It was also important to address mosque attendance. Mosque attendance much like prayer would have little effect on whether or not a respondent could fit in with the host country. However, from a profile viewpoint, it would be important to see if a Muslim American would have increased attendance with their Islamic Center or if they would abandon it in pursuit of fitting in with the non-Muslims that they come in contact with daily.

Across the survey years, it was evident that Muslim Americans favored visiting their Islamic Center or mosque for worship on Friday's for the Jumu'ah prayer. This could be comparable to non-Muslims who overwhelmingly tend to go to religious service once a week. Aside from going to Friday prayer, American Muslims sought to celebrate the annual Eid prayers with their Islamic Center and/or mosque in place of regular attendance. On the basis of daily prayer, it is important to note that the Muslim American community overwhelmingly prays all their daily prayers. As noted, daily prayer is personal and does not weigh on whether or not a person is assimilating or not. I use it only as a proxy measure for a profile perspective to measure if members of this community are maintaining their religious identity.

My third theme covered core social attitudinal values among those of the Muslim American community. This was done by addressing interpretation of Islamic teachings, the importance of the role of immigrants in the United States, and whether there exists a natural conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society. It was important to see if Muslims Americans would believe that there is only one way to interpret the teachings of Islam or if they would become more "moderate" and believe that there were more than one way to interpret the teachings of Islam. With a vast proportion of the Muslim American community being comprised of immigrants from different generations and with them being a minority in terms of the United States being a majority Christian nation, it was important to see from a profile viewpoint if Muslim Americans viewed immigrants as a burden to society or if they believe that immigrants strengthen the community. Furthermore, with the misconception that Islam is not compatible with life in the West and that it is a backward religion that is far from being modern, it was important to see from a profile viewpoint if Muslim Americans believed that there is no natural conflict with being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society.

It was important to examine how members of the Muslim American community feel about the interpretation of Islamic teachings. I sought to measure this because often how liberally a person takes their religion has an effect on their attitude and behavior towards their community. Overwhelmingly, members of the Muslim American community believe that there are more than one way to interpret the teachings of Islam. This shows a more moderate level of thinking upon Muslim Americans. This can also show a trend in Islam becoming more "moderate" and compatible with modern society.

To continue to build the profile of the Muslim American community, it was important to examine how members feel about the role of immigrants in the United States. As noted, Muslim

Americans are religious minorities as well as racial/ethnic minorities. Many members of the Muslim American community are immigrants across generations. It is then not uncommon for the majority of Muslim Americans to believe that immigrants strengthen the country. Typically, this type of measure would be in conjunction with one's political ideology. Muslim Americans tend to be heavily Democratic by nature and as noted Muslim Americans irrespective of political ideology believe that immigrants strengthen the country. However, the trend still shows that Democratic members of the Muslim American community do possess a slight advantage over moderates and conservatives when assessing the role of immigrants.

Furthermore, an important measure of core social attitudinal values would be the belief in whether or not being a devout Muslim would have a natural conflict with living in a modern society. Being a devout believer, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, could pose issues with how one tends to live their lives in accord with not only the laws of the host country, but also the general way of life. As noted, Muslim Americans believe that there is more than one way to interpret the teachings of Islam. This would fit with the attitudinal patterns of belief in a natural conflict between Islam and modern society. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that a vast majority of Muslim Americans believe that there is no natural conflict between Islam and modern society.

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, my study sought to examine the Muslim American community over a three survey year period in which I would be able to examine three attitudinal belief themes and build a profile of the Muslim American community. The three attitudinal belief themes that I sought to examine were the religious attitudinal values of religious identity vs national identity, importance of religion, views on wearing the hijab, and belief in a meritocratic system; the religious adherence values of mosque attendance and daily prayer; and the core social attitudinal values of interpretation of Islamic teachings, the role of immigrants, and perceived conflict between Islam and modern society. In doing so, I also reviewed the sociological theory of symbolic boundaries and how it applies to members of the Muslim American community.

In addition, this study sought to test three hypotheses. First, I sought to identify among Muslim Americans that their religious identity would be more salient than their national identity. Second, I sought to examine whether or not Muslim Americans would abandon the beliefs and rituals of their religion in order to assimilate into American society. Third, I sought to examine among Muslim Americans that their national identity would waver depending on the national / political climate during each survey year.

Based on the findings of this study, I can determine that among Muslim Americans, their religious identity was more salient than their national identity across the three survey years. It can be projected that the reasoning behind this is that Muslims by nature place a lot of importance on their religion and their being Muslim. Depending on the time period it can be projected that Muslim Americans were not happy with the direction of the country, the government, and discrimination.

Based on the findings of this study, I can determine that Muslim Americans did not abandon the beliefs and rituals of their religion in order to assimilate into American society. As noted, Muslims place a huge emphasis on their religion and on being Muslim. Therefore, they will continue to practice their religion irrespective of what others are doing. Most of the rituals and practices of Islam are done inwardly or in private. This would not have an effect on the perception of assimilation. The only outward expressions of being Muslim are praying in public and religious attire. The surveys did not record responses for praying in public and the religious attire in question is that of the hijab. From the research, we see that over the survey periods wearing the hijab was more of a toss-up in which the amount of Muslim Americans who wear the hijab was balanced with the amount of Muslim Americans who stated that they never wear the hijab.

Based on the findings of this study, I can determine that among Muslim Americans their national identity did waver slightly depending on the national / political climate of the country during each survey year. As the survey years got further away from 9/11 and the political climate began to become more trusting of the Muslim Americans, the national identity would start to rise. However, when it got close to 2017 and the presidential election of Trump, the national identity began to drop. With a rise of Islamophobia and anti-Islamic rhetoric reaching high levels, a sense of national identity and belonging began to decrease.

The significance of these findings are essential to collecting more information on the Muslim American community. This can result in more beneficial ways of combating Islamophobia. The Muslim American community is a unique community that needs to be studied more so that social justice initiatives can be brought to the surface. In this regard, future research recommendations may need to be formed in order to better assist this special community.

REFERENCES

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2006. “The Civil Sphere”. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bail, Christopher A. 2012. “The Fringe Effect: Civil Society Organizations and the Evolution of Media Discourse about Islam since the September 11th Attacks”. *American Sociological Review.* 77(6):855-879.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2003. “Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States”. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Braunstein, Ruth. 2017. “Muslims as outsiders, enemies, and others: The 2016 presidential election and the politics of religious exclusion”. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*. 5(3):355-372.

Brubaker, Rogers. 1999. “The Manichean myth: Rethinking the distinction between “civic” and “ethnic” nationalism”. *Nation and National Identity: The European Experience in Perspective.* Zurich: Ruegger.

Casey, Patrick M. 2017. “Stigmatized Identities: Too Muslim to Be American, Too American to Be Muslim”. *Symbolic Interaction.* 41(1): 100-119.

Cole, Nicki Lisa, Ph.D. 2020. “How Different Cultural Groups Become More Alike”. Retrieved from https://www.thoughtco.com/assimilation-definition-4149483.

de Tocqueville, A. 2003. “Democracy in America”. New York: Penguin Classics.

Douglas, Mary. 1966. “Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo”. New York: Praeger.

Durkheim, Emile. 1995. “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life”, Trans. Karen E. Fields. New York, NY: Free Press.

Epstein, Catherine Fuchs. 1992. “Tinker-bells and pinups: the construction and reconstruction of gender boundaries at work”.

DelReal, J.A. 2016. “Trump claims assimilation among American Muslims is “close” to “non-existent”. The Washington Post.

Fuller, Robert C. 1995. “Wine, Symbolic Boundary Setting, and American Religious Communities”. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 63(3):487-517.

Gould, Eric D. and Klor, Esteban F. 2014. “The Long-Run Effect of 9/11: Terrorism, Backlash, and the Assimilation of Muslim Immigrants in the West”. *The Economic Journal (London)*. 126(587): 2064-2114.

Herberg, Will. 1955. “Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology”. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Howell, K. 2015. “Bill Maher blasts liberals for defending Islam: Muslims sharing Western values is “bullshit”. The Washington Times.

Jones, Robert P. 2016. “The End of White Christian America”. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Keating, M. 1996. “Nations Against the State: The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia, and Scotland”. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

Kruse, Kevin. 2015. “One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America”. New York: Basic Books.

Laird, Lance D, Abu-Ras, Wahiba, & Senzai, Farid. 2013. “Cultural Citizenship and Belonging: Muslim International Medical Graduates in the USA”. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. 33(3): 356-370.

Lamont, Michele. 2000. “The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration”. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lamont, Michele & Molnar, Virag. 2002. “The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences”. *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 28: 167-195.

Lamont, Michele, Pendergrass, Sabrina, & Pachucki, Mark. 2015. “Symbolic Boundaries”. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. 2(23): 850-855.

Olson, Laura. 2011. “The Essentiality of ‘Culture’ in the Study of Religion and Politics”. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 50(4):639-653.

Pew Research Center. 2002. “Americans struggle with religion’s role at home and abroad”. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Pew Research Center. 2006. “Many Americans Uneasy with Mix of Religion and Politics”. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Pew Research Center. 2011. “Muslim Americans: No signs of growth in alienation or support for extremism”. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center. 2016. “Republicans prefer blunt talk about Islamic extremism, Democrats favor caution”. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Pew Research Center. 2017. “U.S. Muslims Concerned About Their Place In Society, But Continue To Believe In The American Dream”. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.

Pew Research Center. 2017. “What It Takes to Truly Be ‘One of Us’”. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Pew Research Center. 2018. “New estimates show U.S. Muslim population continues to grow”. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.

Pew Research Center. 2021. “Muslims are a growing presence in U.S., but still face negative views from the public”. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.

Runnymede Trust. 1997. “A challenge for us all: Report of the Runnymede Trust commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia. London England: The Runnymede Trust.

Saleem, Muniba, Wojcieszak, Magdalena E., Hawkins, Ian. 2019. “Social Identity Threats: How Media and Discrimination Affect Muslim Americans’ Identification as Americans and Trust in the U.S. Government”. *Journal of Communication.* 69(2): 214-236.

Shady, Stephanie N. 2022. “Territory and the divine: the intersection of religion and national identity”. *West European Politics*, 45(4), 744-766.

Straughn, Jeremy B. & Feld, Scott L. 2010. “America as a “Christian nation”? Understanding Religious Boundaries of National Identity in the United States”. *Sociology of Religion*, 71(3), 280-306

Tranby, Eric & Zulkowski, Samantha E. 2012. “Religion as Cultural Power: The Role of Religion in Influencing Americans’ Symbolic Boundaries around Gender and Sexuality”. *Sociology Compass*. 6(11):870-882.

Trittler, Sabine. 2017. “Explaining Differences in the Salience of Religion as a Symbolic Boundary of National Belonging in Europe”. *European Sociological Review*, 33(5), 708-720.

Wang, Sherry C., Raja, Aysha H., & Azhar, Sabreen. 2020. “A Lot of Us Have a Very Difficult Time Reconciling What Being Muslim Is”: A Phenomenological Study on the Meaning of Being Muslim American”. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology.* 26(3): 338-346.

Williams, RH. 2013. “Civil religion and the cultural politics of national identity in Obama’s America”. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 52(2):239-257.

Wimmer, Andreas. 2008. “The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory”. *American Journal of Sociology.* 113:970-1022.

Appendix A - Tables

Table 1: Comparison of Datasets

	Pew Research Center	Pew Research Center	Pew Research Center
Collection Year	2007	2011	2017
Sample Size	1,050	1,033	1,001
Dependent Variables	National / Religious Identity (identity) Importance of Religion (importance) Views of Wearing Hijab (hijab) Meritocracy (merit)	National / Religious Identity (identity) Importance of Religion (importance) Views of Wearing Hijab (hijab) Meritocracy (merit)	National / Religious Identity (Not Asked) Importance of Religion (importance) Views of Wearing Hijab (hijab) Meritocracy (merit)

Table 2: Independent Variable and Coding

Variable	Question Wording & Recoding
Race	0-White, 1-Black, 2-Asian, 3-Other
Gender	0-Male, 1-Female
Sect	0-Sunni, 1-Shi'a, 2-Other / Non-Specific
Political Ideology	0-Conservative, 1-Moderate, 2-Liberal
Education	0-HS or <, 1-Some College, 2-Graduate
Birthplace	0-USA, 1-Arab Region, 2-South Asia, 3-Other, 4-Africa

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics For Independent Variables (N=3,084)

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables

(N=3,084)

Variable	Percent	Observations
Race / Ethnicity		
(1) White	32.7%	962
(2) Black	21.1%	620
(3) Asian	32.9%	968
(4) Other	13.4%	395
Gender		
(1) Male	56.5%	1,743
(2) Female	43.5%	1,341
Religious Sect		
(1) Sunni	64.4%	1,885
(2) Shi'a	15.4%	450
(3) Other / Non-Specific	20.3%	594
Political Ideology		
(1) Conservative	19.9%	545
(2) Moderate	49.2%	1,352
(3) Liberal	30.9%	849
Education Level		
(1) HS or Less	27.3%	834
(2) Some College	21.3%	651
(3) Graduate	51.4%	1,571
Birthplace		
(1) USA	30.8%	918

(2) Arab Region	24.9%	742
(3) South Asia	29.6%	883
(4) Other	6.2%	184
(5) Africa	8.6%	257

Appendix B - Charts

Chart 1: Temporal Changes in National / Religious Identity

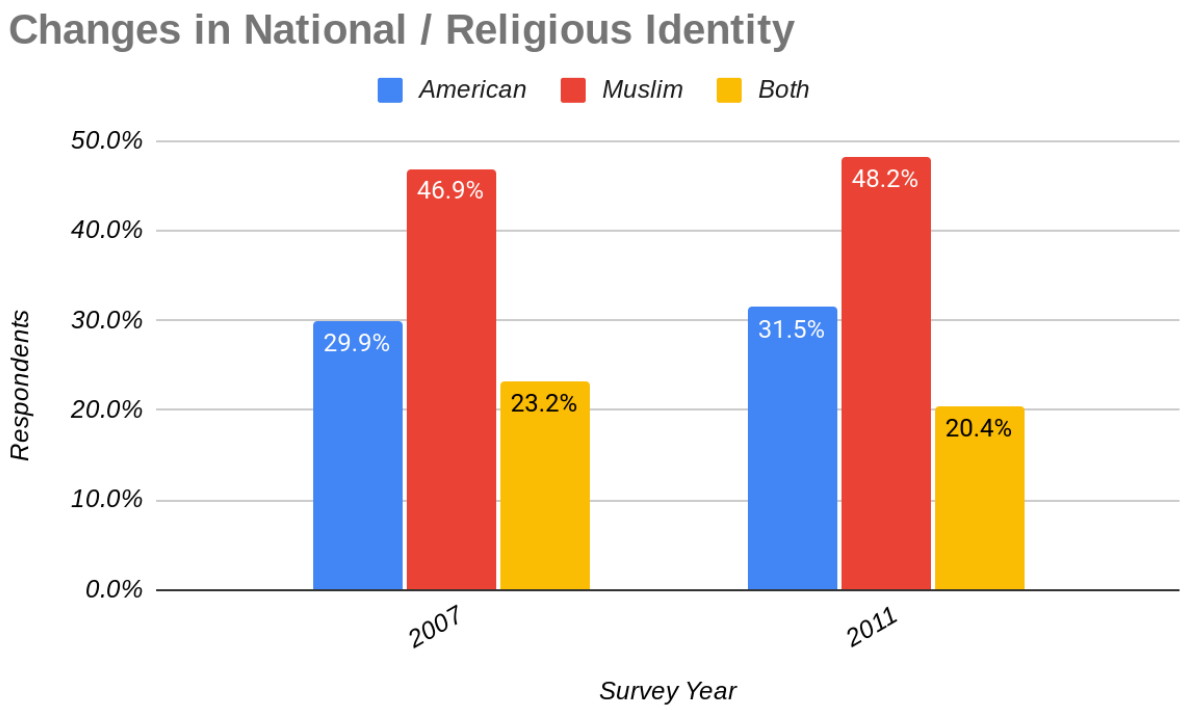


Chart 2: Temporal Changes in Importance of Religion in Respondent's Life

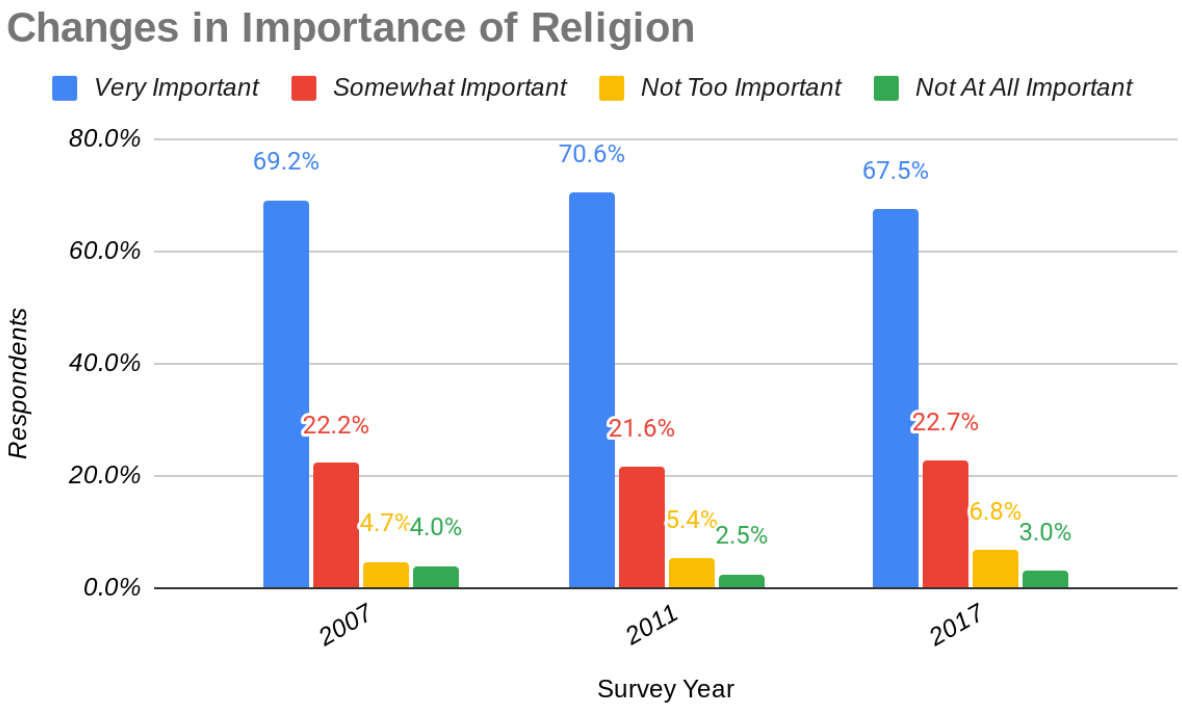


Chart 3: Temporal Changes in Wearing Hijab

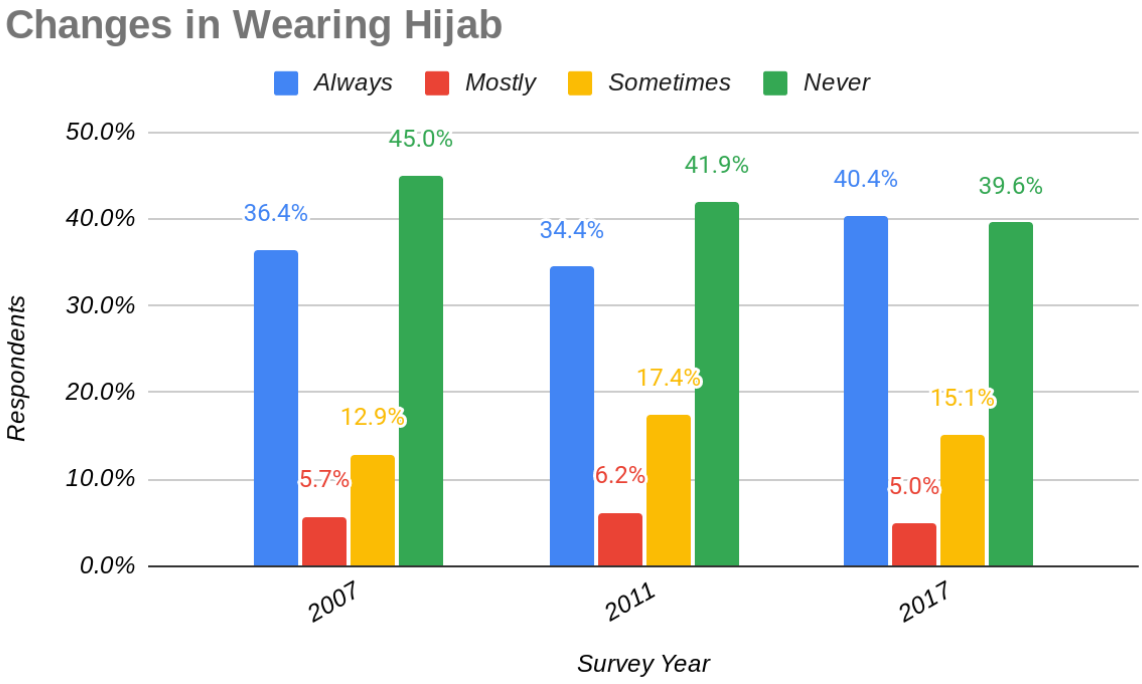


Chart 4: Temporal Changes in Views on Meritocracy

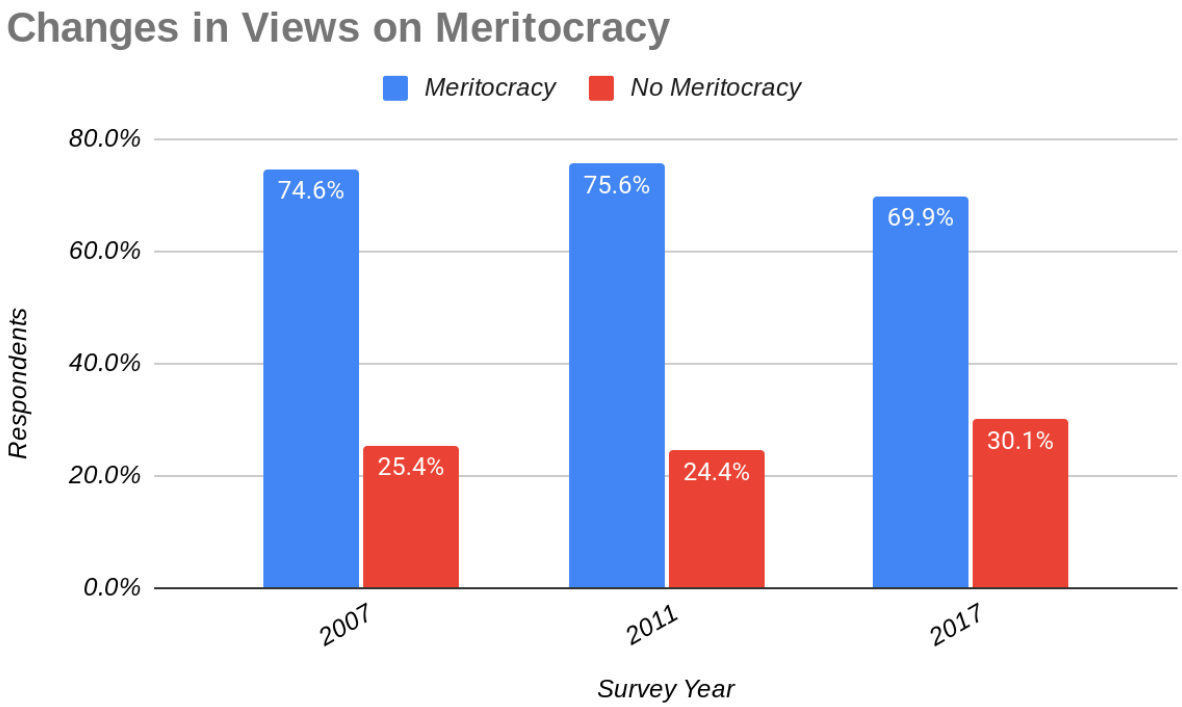


Chart 5: Temporal Changes on Views of Mosque Attendance

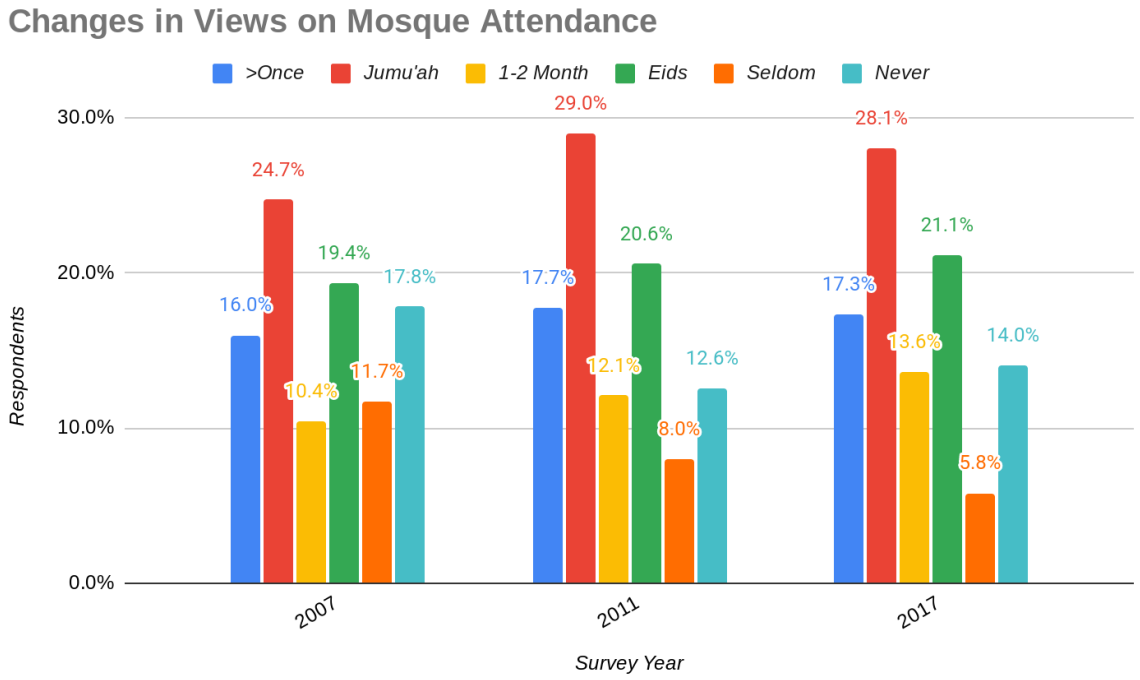


Chart 6: Temporal Changes in Views on Daily Prayer

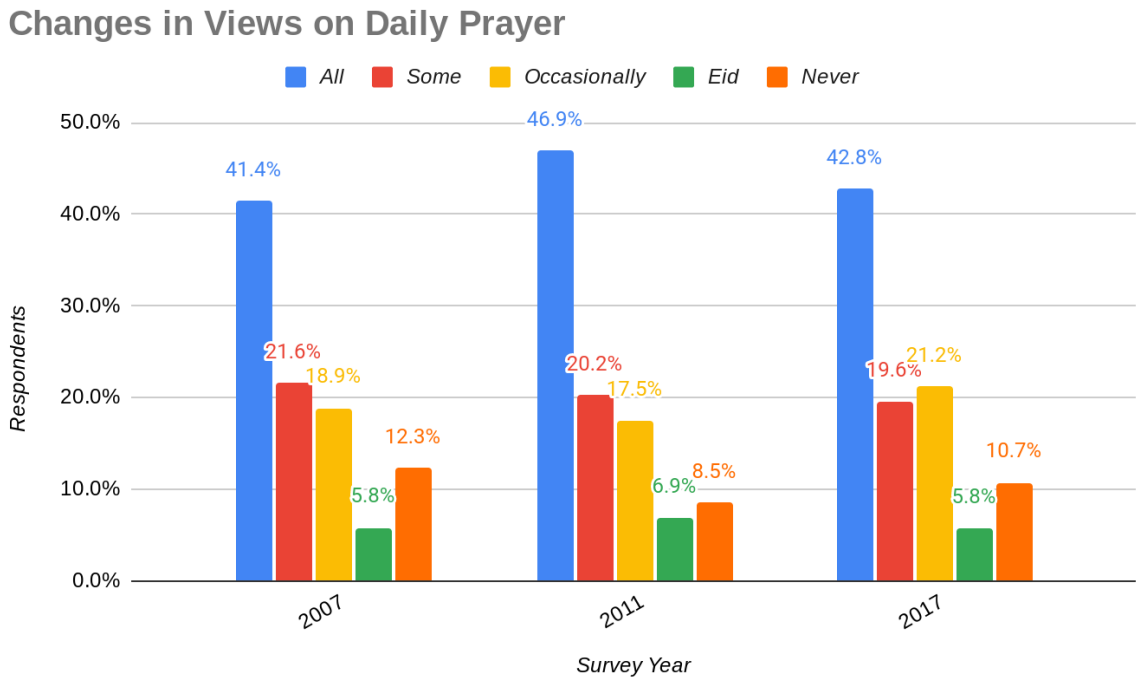


Chart 7: Temporal Changes in Views on Islamic Interpretation

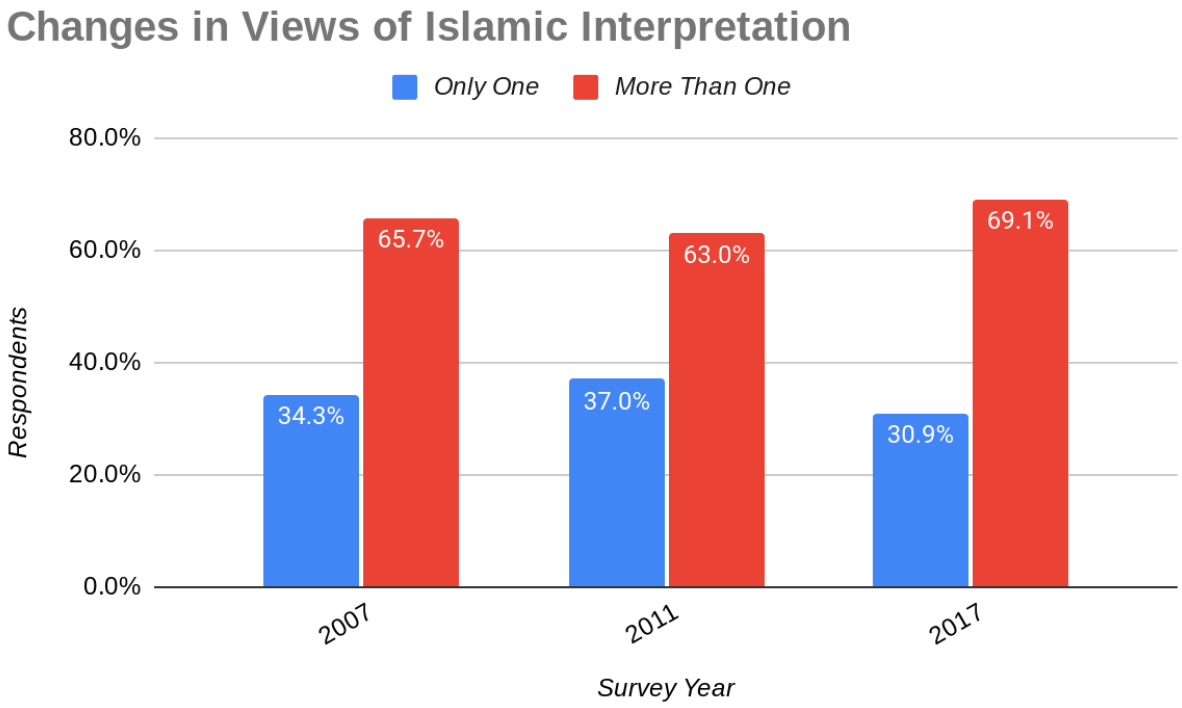


Chart 8: Temporal Changes in Views on the Role of Immigrants

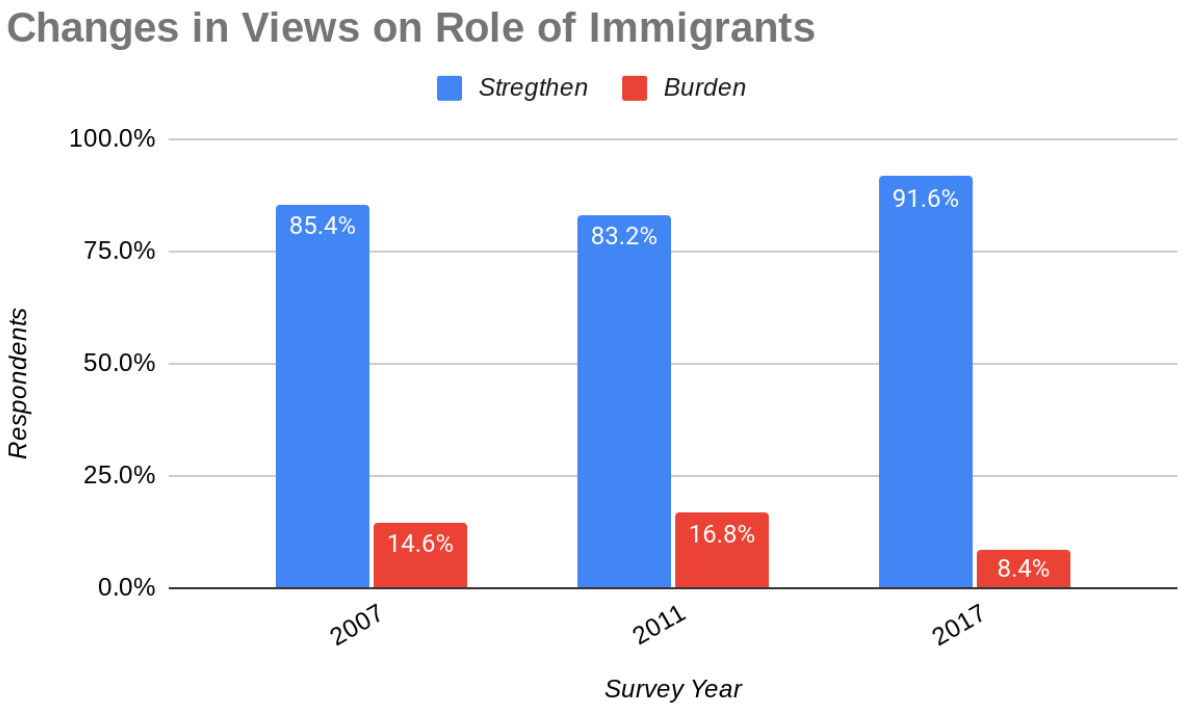
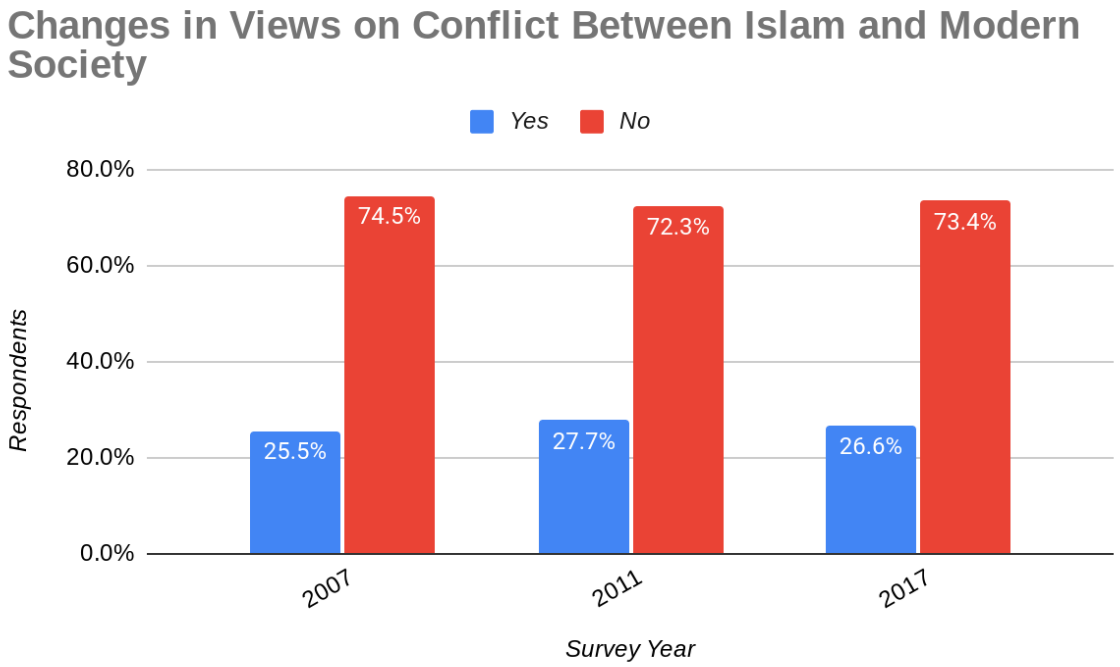
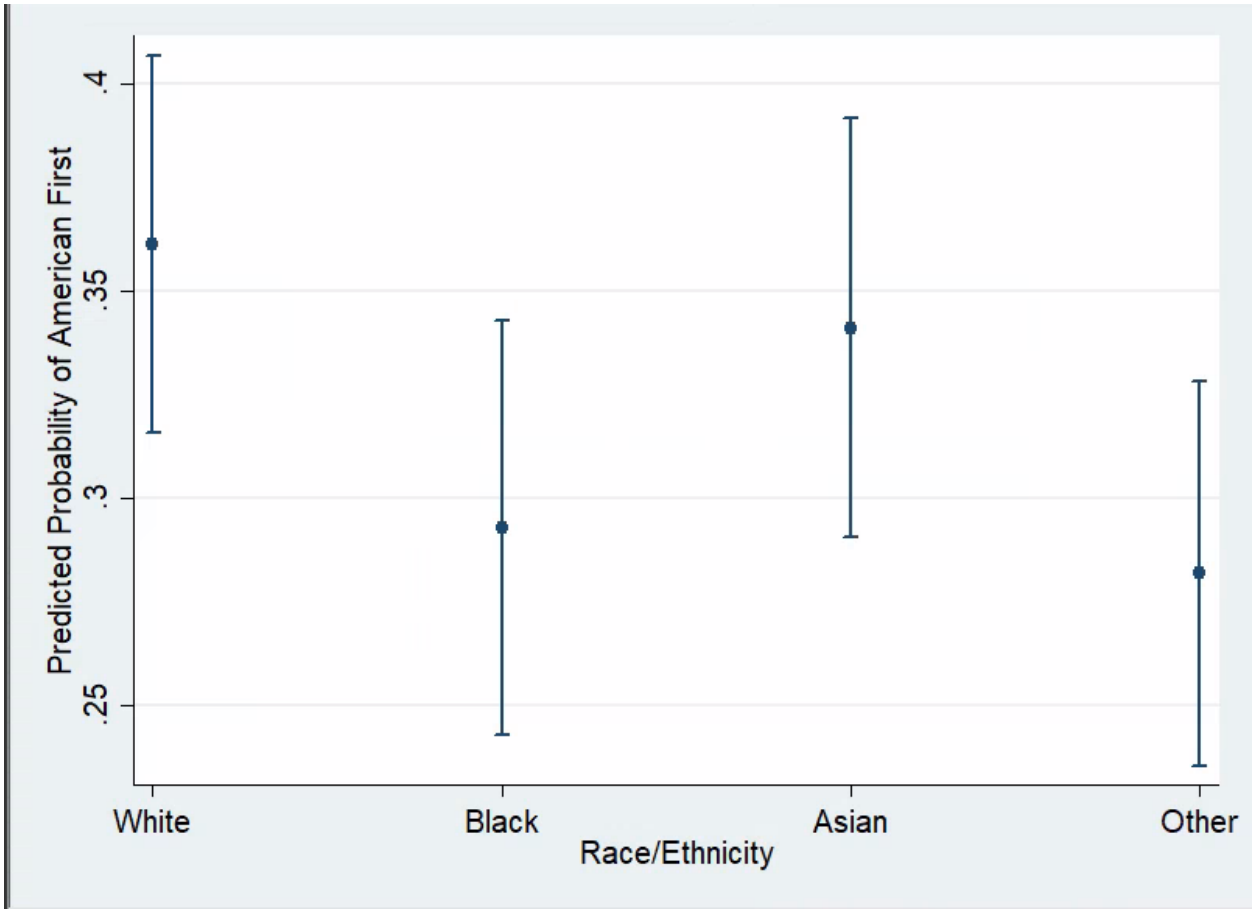


Chart 9: Temporal Changes in Views on Conflict Between Islam and Modern Society

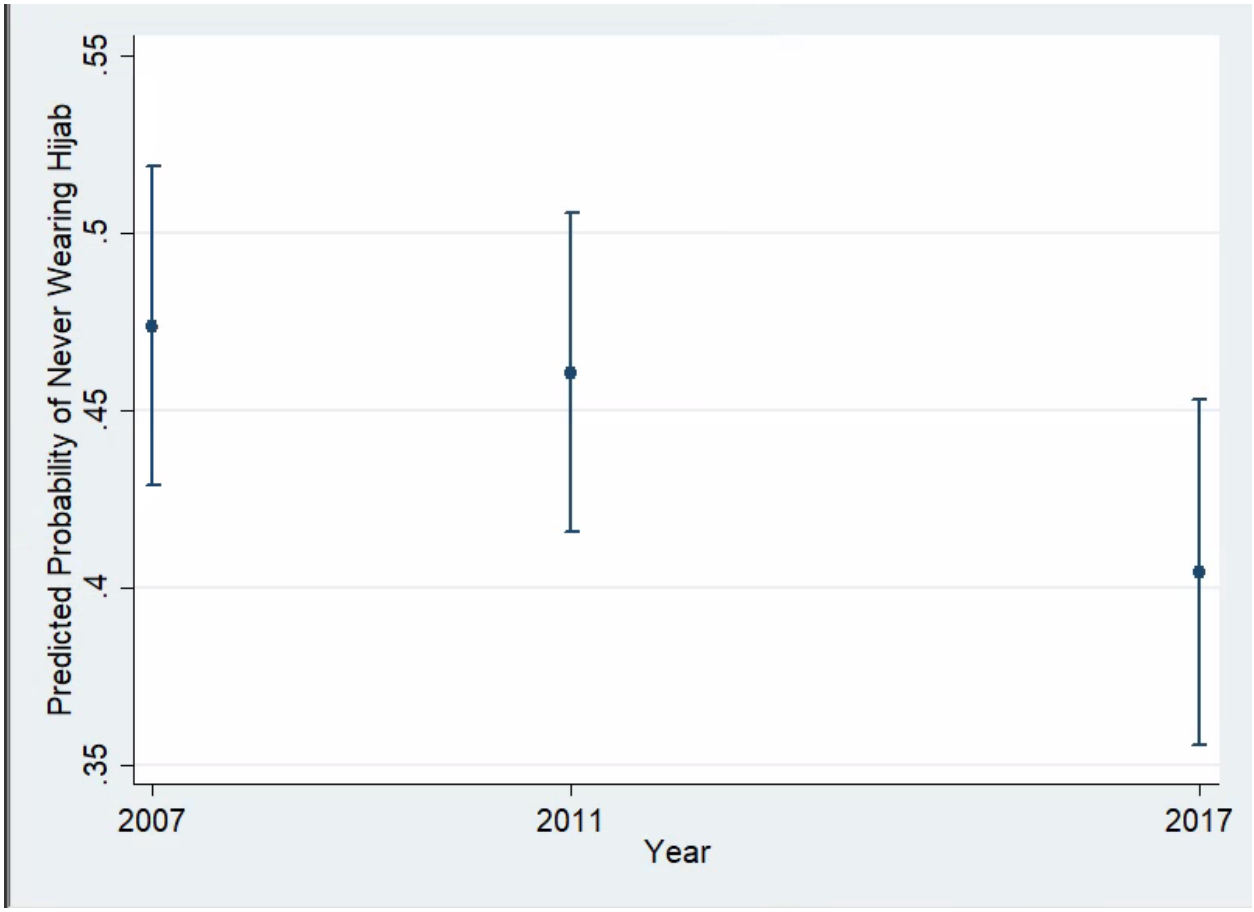


Appendix C - Graphs

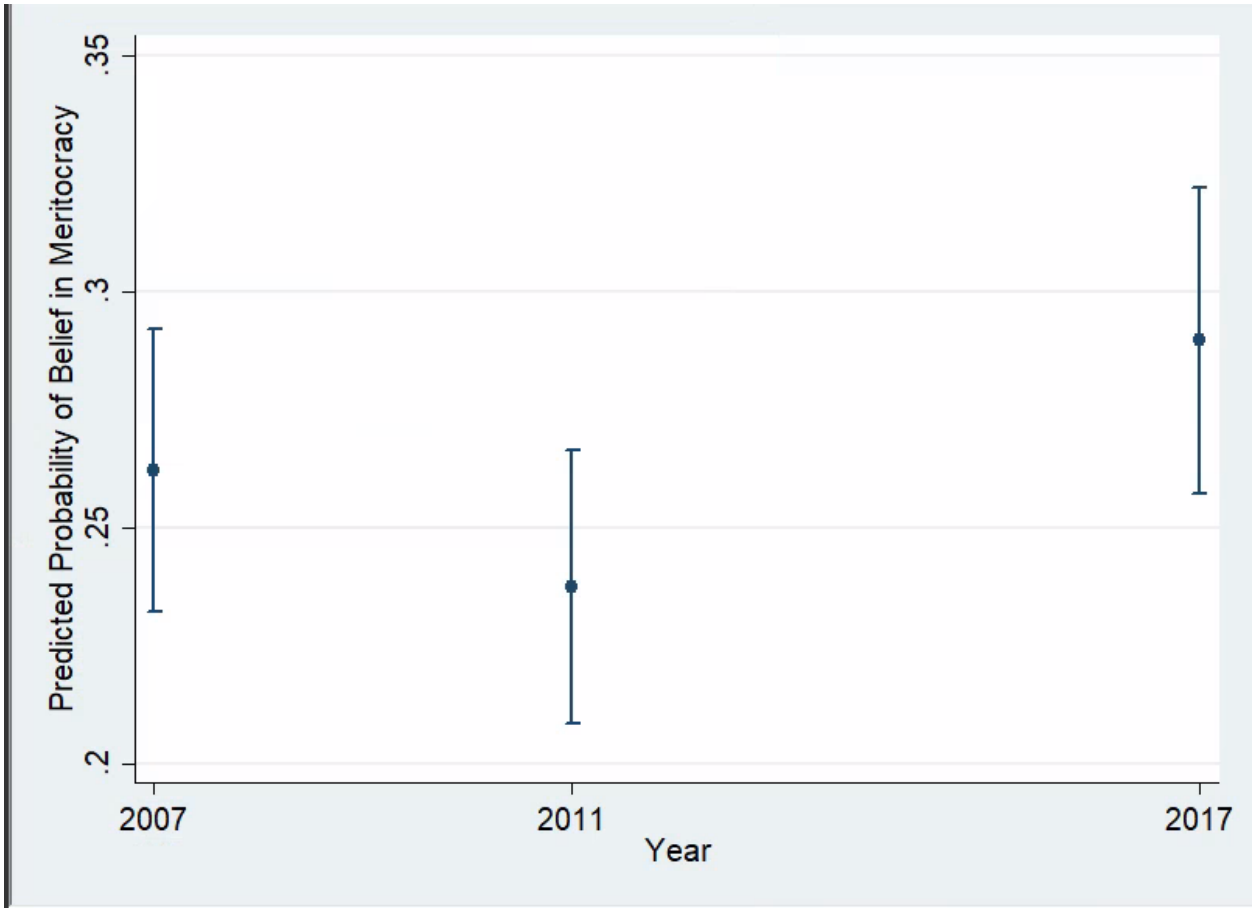
Graph 1: Predicted Probability of Religion Being Very Important in Relation to Race/Ethnicity



Graph 2: Predicted Probability of Identifying as American First in Relation to Race/Ethnicity



Graph 3: Predicted Probability of Never Wearing Hijab Based on Survey Year.



Graph 4: Predicted Probability of Belief in Meritocracy Based on Survey Year.

Appendix D - Models

Regression Model 1: Multinomial Regression for Identity Variable

identity	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
American	(base outcome)					
Muslim						
year	-.0025272	.0304945	-0.08	0.934	-.0622954	.057241
raceth						
Black	.8863559	.2092948	4.23	0.000	.4761456	1.296566
Asian	.6232405	.2116946	2.94	0.003	.2083268	1.038154
Other	.7196058	.193514	3.72	0.000	.3403253	1.098886
gender						
Female	.5241687	.1243232	4.22	0.000	.2804998	.7678377
sect						
Shi'a	-1.078637	.1821958	-5.92	0.000	-1.435734	-.7215396
Other / Non-Specific	-.9357043	.1591624	-5.88	0.000	-1.247657	-.6237517
pol						
Moderate	-.0629498	.1619003	-0.39	0.697	-.3802684	.2543689
Liberal	-.3093766	.1764826	-1.75	0.080	-.6552762	.036523
education						
Some College	-.2487168	.1777628	-1.40	0.162	-.5971255	.0996919
Graduate	-.5965956	.1561262	-3.82	0.000	-.9025973	-.2905939
birthplace						
Arab Region	.5621408	.1944727	2.89	0.004	.1809813	.9433003
South Asia	.1976458	.2261118	0.87	0.382	-.2455252	.6408168
Other	-.288904	.2570933	-1.12	0.261	-.7927976	.2149895
Africa	.0926564	.2345889	0.39	0.693	-.3671293	.5524422
_cons	5.373225	61.25977	0.09	0.930	-114.6937	125.4402
Both						
year	-.0428083	.0361179	-1.19	0.236	-.1135981	.0279816
raceth						
Black	.2485383	.2618118	0.95	0.342	-.2646034	.7616799

```
            Asian  | -.0411485   .2531938    -0.16   0.871    -.5373991    .4551021
            Other  |  .4642443   .2206366     2.10   0.035     .0318045    .8966841
                   |
           gender  |
           Female  |  .3913139    .147033     2.66   0.008     .1031346    .6794931
                   |
             sect  |
            Shi'a  | -.8200318   .2100703    -3.90   0.000    -1.231762   -.4083016
Other / Non-Specific | -.2242167    .183628    -1.22   0.222    -.5841209    .1356875
                   |
              pol  |
         Moderate  | -.3421906   .1882274    -1.82   0.069    -.7111096    .0267284
          Liberal  | -.3357166    .204481    -1.64   0.101     -.736492    .0650587
                   |
        education  |
     Some College  | -.1393659   .2294842    -0.61   0.544    -.5891466    .3104148
         Graduate  |  .0824097   .1906662     0.43   0.666    -.2912893    .4561086
                   |
       birthplace  |
      Arab Region  |  1.074812   .2332466     4.61   0.000     .6176575    1.531967
      South Asia   |  .8129635   .2791154     2.91   0.004     .2659074     1.36002
            Other  |  .0834903   .3161552     0.26   0.792    -.5361625    .7031432
           Africa  |  .4974123   .2871629     1.73   0.083    -.0654167    1.060241
                   |
            _cons  |    85.175    72.5518     1.17   0.240    -57.02392    227.3739
```

Regression Model 2: Ordered Logistic Regression For Importance of Religion

importance	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
year	1.002487	.0112437	0.22	0.825	.9806898	1.024768
raceth						
Black	.4117172	.0697176	-5.24	0.000	.2954349	.5737677
Asian	.7413608	.1028524	-2.16	0.031	.564857	.9730177
Other	.8243682	.1197428	-1.33	0.184	.6201272	1.095877
gender						
Female	.5975525	.0557708	-5.52	0.000	.4976587	.7174976
sect						
Shi'a	3.253766	.3872366	9.91	0.000	2.576815	4.108558
Other / Non-Specific	1.523068	.1852579	3.46	0.001	1.200006	1.933102
pol						
Moderate	1.430047	.1913711	2.67	0.008	1.100123	1.858914
Liberal	2.360523	.330284	6.14	0.000	1.794354	3.105333
education						
Some College	.8853982	.1286208	-0.84	0.402	.6660173	1.177041
Graduate	1.554752	.1843655	3.72	0.000	1.232322	1.961545
birthplace						
Arab Region	.9274081	.127739	-0.55	0.584	.7079921	1.214824
South Asia	1.02953	.1544314	0.19	0.846	.7672861	1.381405
Other	2.193408	.4115394	4.19	0.000	1.518491	3.168302
Africa	.562022	.1205397	-2.69	0.007	.3691406	.8556869

Regression Model 3: Ordered Logistic Regression for Views on Wearing Hijab

hijab	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
year	.9673357	.0150757	-2.13	0.033	.9382345	.9973395
raceth						
Black	.491576	.0988294	-3.53	0.000	.331482	.7289897
Asian	.8924019	.1759926	-0.58	0.564	.6063077	1.313493
Other	.913257	.1837169	-0.45	0.652	.6156864	1.354648
sect						
Shi'a	3.842501	.7295331	7.09	0.000	2.648536	5.574709
Other / Non-Specific	2.140567	.3500608	4.65	0.000	1.553554	2.949384
pol						
Moderate	1.31314	.220589	1.62	0.105	.9447596	1.82516
Liberal	2.237786	.4022439	4.48	0.000	1.57331	3.182898
education						
Some College	1.656616	.2944265	2.84	0.005	1.169337	2.34695
Graduate	1.906634	.291201	4.23	0.000	1.413393	2.572004
birthplace						
Arab Region	.7951164	.1445257	-1.26	0.207	.5568146	1.135405
South Asia	1.537463	.3133481	2.11	0.035	1.031151	2.292381
Other	3.870866	1.100127	4.76	0.000	2.217638	6.756559
Africa	.8709968	.2189081	-0.55	0.583	.5322106	1.425442

Regression Model 4: Logistic Regression For Belief in Meritocracy

merit	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
year	1.01537	.0118349	1.31	0.191	.992437	1.038833
raceth						
Black	1.038931	.1611444	0.25	0.806	.7665852	1.408034
Asian	.6717242	.1027197	-2.60	0.009	.4977666	.9064758
Other	.8808522	.1374714	-0.81	0.416	.6487227	1.196044
gender						
Female	.9106633	.0871408	-0.98	0.328	.7549304	1.098522
sect						
Shi'a	.8807964	.1225918	-0.91	0.362	.6705064	1.15704
Other / Non-Specific	1.051244	.1292256	0.41	0.684	.8261679	1.337638
pol						
Moderate	1.037784	.1344359	0.29	0.775	.8050841	1.337743
Liberal	1.328478	.181081	2.08	0.037	1.01702	1.735318
education						
Some College	.912833	.1293635	-0.64	0.520	.6914519	1.205093
Graduate	1.197836	.1438176	1.50	0.133	.9466688	1.515641
birthplace						
Arab Region	.62709	.0897855	-3.26	0.001	.4736489	.8302391
South Asia	.7600736	.1211862	-1.72	0.085	.5560835	1.038894
Other	.6870862	.1489005	-1.73	0.083	.4493087	1.050697
Africa	.5836989	.1084111	-2.90	0.004	.4055965	.8400083
_cons	2.15e-14	5.05e-13	-1.34	0.180	2.31e-34	2006782