# Religion and Democracy
## in the United States

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DANGER OR OPPORTUNITY?

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# Chapter 3

## MUSLIM AMERICANS

### Enriching or Depleting American Democracy?

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Since 9-11, Muslim Americans have increasingly been viewed as sus-
picious entities in American society. Not only is there a pervasive and
dominating fear that Muslims have violent tendencies aimed at destroy-
ing all things American, but even those Muslims who profess allegiance
to America are thought inherently incapable of sharing core American
democratic values because they embrace a rigid and intolerant Islamic
faith. Thus, not only are Muslim Americans viewed as other conservative
religious groups, like the Christian Right, as groups that uphold inher-
ently intolerant and regressive beliefs; this group is also viewed as anti-
American and as people who, through the use of violence, can undermine
American freedom and democratic liberties altogether. We have seen the
manifestation of these stereotypes in both policy and popular discourses.
In fact, these two overarching themes structure the interactions between
mainstream society and the Muslim population.

Although the horror of 9-11 has in many ways shaped these negative
interactions, the catastrophic event has raised the opportunity to better
understand the Muslim-American experience before and after 9-11. In
the first-ever national poll of Muslim Americans, the Pew Research Cen-
ter found that Muslim Americans are very much a mainstream religious
minority in the United States.[1] They share many of the same religious val-
ues of the general American public. Mostly middle class, Muslim Ameri-
cans are concerned with issues similar to those that occupy the general
American population. Yet, differences emerge between the two popula-
tions as well. Muslim Americans are more worried about the effects of
9-11 on their own communities and are more critical of U.S. foreign
policy in the Middle East.

These survey findings not only provide us with the unique opportu-
nity to compare Muslim Americans to the general population but also
offer us the ability to better understand significant patterns and varia-
tions that emerge within the sample of Muslims. This chapter first offers
an overview of the Muslim-American community. Where applicable, it

also makes comparisons to the larger mainstream U.S. population. The study then examines the ways in which two sets of issues mediate patterns of Muslim-American political engagement. The following suppositions guide this line of inquiry.

First, from a mainstream standpoint, Muslims are often seen as different and threatening. There is wide belief that the Islamic religion is antidemocratic. To examine these claims more carefully, it is imperative to look at the effect of Muslim religiosity and identity on levels of political engagement. Are more observant Muslims less likely to participate politically? Are religious Muslims more likely to remain marginalized from mainstream society? Do they shy away from participation in the "secular" institutions of the state? What about those individuals who strongly identify as Muslim? Are they more likely to remain on the outskirts of the mainstream and to resist assimilation?[2] Are they more likely to hold values that are anti-American? Second, complementing this line of inquiry, what are the concerns that emanate from within the Muslim community? How do levels of real and perceived discrimination mediate patterns of political engagement? This chapter will simultaneously address these two sets of issues. First, however, we begin with an overview of the American Muslim community.

## THE AMERICAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY

The American Muslim community today stands at around 6 million individuals.[3] Sixty-five percent of the community is foreign born, whereas 35 percent of American Muslims were born in the United States. Muslim immigrants come from at least sixty-eight different countries: 24 percent of the Muslim population directly emigrated from Arab countries; 18 percent came from Pakistan or another South Asian country, and 8 percent came from Iran. Another 5 percent of the Muslim community came from Europe, and 4 percent from Africa. Another 6 percent immigrated from other countries. Thirty-nine percent of the Muslim population in the United States is relatively new, having arrived after 1990. And among native-born Muslims, slightly more than half (57 percent) are African-American. Twenty-five percent of the community converted to Islam, and 75 percent of native-born Muslims were born into the faith. One-fifth of the native-born (or 7 percent of the entire sample) population is second-generation immigrant. Muslims immigrate to the United States for a variety of reasons. Education and economic opportunities are cited by almost equal percentages of the population (26 percent and 24 percent, respectively). Twenty percent of the Muslim population say that they came to the United States to escape conflict and persecution in their home country, and 77 percent of all Muslim immigrants are U.S. citizens. No

single racial group constitutes a majority among the Muslim-American population—39 percent describe themselves as white, 26 percent black, 20 percent Asian, and 16 percent as of mixed race.

### Income and Education

Muslim Americans generally resemble the mainstream population when we examine their levels of education and income. More than a fifth (22 percent) of the Muslim population is enrolled in college classes. These percentages extend to both the foreign-born and immigrant communities. However, a somewhat larger proportion of Muslims have not finished high school (21 percent) than is true for the public at large (16 percent).

Economically, family income among Muslim Americans is roughly comparable with that of the general U.S. population. Among U.S. adults, 44 percent report household incomes of $50,000 or more annually, as do 41 percent of Muslim-American adults. At the highest end of the income scale, Muslim Americans are about as likely to report household incomes of $100,000 or more as are members of the general public (16 percent for Muslims compared with 17 percent among the general public). Roughly a third of both Muslim Americans (35 percent) and adults nationwide (33 percent) report household incomes of less than $30,000.

These impressive levels of economic integration stand in direct contrast to the experience of Muslims in Europe. Surveys of Muslim populations in Great Britain, France, Germany, and Spain conducted in 2006 as part of the Pew Global Attitudes Project found Muslims to fare much worse than their average European counterparts. For example, 53 percent of Muslims in Germany reported family incomes of less than €18,000 annually, compared to only 25 percent of Germans overall. A similar trend exists in France. In Great Britain, 61 percent of Muslims reported incomes of less than £20,000 annually, compared to only 39 percent of the general public. And 73 percent of Spanish Muslims report incomes of less than €14,500, compared with half of the Spanish public nationwide.

All in all, the Pew Survey of Muslim Americans found the community to be highly assimilated and successful. Not only do Muslim Americans resemble the general population in terms of income and education distribution, but the Muslim-American community today is also highly satisfied and happy. The community's level of satisfaction resembles those levels of the general population; compared to 49 percent in the general population, 42 percent of Muslim Americans are satisfied.

Differences, however, do emerge between the Muslim-American and general populations. Muslims tend to be more socially conservative than the general population. For example, 61 percent of Muslims said homosexuality should be discouraged, compared to 38 percent in the general

population. However, despite their social conservatism, they are strong advocates of bigger government. For example, 70 percent of Muslims, compared to 63 percent of the general population, believe the government should do more to help the needy. The support of Muslims for big government extends also to the terrain of ethics: 59 percent of the Muslim-American community believes the government should do more to protect "morality" in society, whereas 37 percent of the general population supports this intervention.

The Muslim-American population and the general population are most divided on matters relating to U.S. foreign policy. Only 35 percent of the Muslim population thinks the United States made the right decision to go to war in Afghanistan. An even smaller 12 percent thinks we made the right decision in going into Iraq. The general population is more supportive of the government's decision to go to war—61 percent supported the war in Afghanistan, and 45 percent supported the war in Iraq. These foreign policy assessments extended to George W. Bush's approval rating, with only 15 percent of the Muslim population approving of the way Bush was handling his job; in the general population, a larger 35 percent approved of the way Bush handled his job. Of those Muslim Americans who voted in the 2004 national election, only 14 percent chose Bush, with the vast majority—71 percent—voting for John Kerry.

Not only are Muslims more critical of U.S. foreign policy, but these assessments extend to the War on Terror as well. Whereas 67 percent of the general population believes the War on Terror is a sincere effort to curb terrorism, only 26 percent of the Muslim population believes this to be the case. The two populations are closer in their profiling assessments concerning the War on Terror; 54 percent of the Muslim community believes that the War on Terror singles out Muslims, whereas 45 percent of the general population believes this is the case. However, they diverge on the degree to which it bothers them—74 percent of Muslims say it bothers them a lot, compared to a much smaller 52 percent in the general population. On such matters as the Arab-Israeli conflict, we see greater agreement: 61 percent of Muslim Americans believe that a way can be found for Palestinians and Israelis to coexist. This percentage is shared by the general population, with a slightly higher 67 percent believing peaceful coexistence is possible.

On political participation scores and measures, we see another set of similarities and differences. Most notably, Muslim Americans are far less likely to identify as Republican; further, they were less supportive of George W. Bush than the general population. Of the Muslim-American population, 37 percent identified as Democratic, whereas 34 percent of the general population did so. Although comparable percentages identified with the

Democratic Party, only 7 percent of the Muslim population—compared to 24 percent of the general population—said they were Republican. In the 2004 election, only 14 percent of the Muslim community voted for Bush, whereas 50 percent of the general population did so. As we have seen, though, the Bush Administration's War on Terror and unpopular foreign policy did not resonate well with the Muslim-American community.

### Muslim Americans: Political Engagement and 9-11

Since the events of 9-11, Muslim Americans have been portrayed as both victim and suspect. The general American population both sympathizes with and remains wary of this religious minority. In this conundrum, Muslim Americans have come to play a new dual role in the post–9-11 environment. Today they find themselves both having to take a defensive stance toward Islam as they also attempt to secure their status as an American minority group. Unlike other minorities, however, there is deep concern within the larger society about whether Muslims respect and appreciate democracy. Will Muslim absorption and integration threaten democracy more largely?

The events of 9-11 have only heightened the urgency of these questions. It is indeed unfortunate that Muslim Americans have come to be known to millions of other Americans through this lens of terrorism. It is also through this very lens that Muslim Americans continue to engage mainstream America. Muslims know that they are perceived to be a highly suspicious minority group, that their patriotic loyalties are being tested day in and day out. Although 9-11 is several years removed from us, this prism of interaction, it appears, will continue to structure engagement between Muslims and the mainstream public for years to come.

Thus, American Muslims today find themselves having to represent and speak for Muslims across the globe—often having to explain the more grotesque and demoralizing topics of sectarian violence in Iraq, suicide bombings in Palestine, or the limited rights women enjoy in Saudi Arabia. Muslims in America have become accustomed to explaining to the average listener that Islam does not condone these actions, the religion has been hijacked, and it certainly is not the Islam that Muslim Americans embrace. In fact, when Muslim Americans vigorously condemn the repulsive headlines that dominate the news, it is often assumed that an "Americanizing" effect, rather than ingrained Muslim orientations, mediates these more "moderate" viewpoints. Although we see that Muslim Americans are far more moderate than Muslims across the globe, worry and mistrust persist.

The Pew Survey reveals that Muslim Americans are more moderate on questions pertaining to violence than other Muslims in Europe and across

the Muslim world. The percentage of U.S. Muslims who feel suicide bombings are justifiable and those who have favorable views of al-Qaeda are remarkably low—especially when these percentages are compared to those for other Muslims in other countries. In Europe, 16 percent of the Muslim population of France, 16 percent of the Muslim population in Spain, and 15 percent of Britain's Muslim population felt suicide bombings are often or sometimes justified. Compared to the 8 percent of U.S. Muslims who felt so, European Muslims, then, are twice as likely to see suicide bombings as justifiable. When compared to their counterparts in the Muslim world, the U.S. percentage is small. In Nigeria, 49 percent of the population reported that suicide bombings are often or sometimes justifiable, with another 29 percent in Jordan in agreement; 28 percent of Egyptians feel that suicide bombings are often or sometimes justifiable, and among Turks, 17 percent shares the view. In Pakistan, only 14 percent can see themselves justifying suicide bombings, and among Indonesians, another 10 percent will say that they are often or sometimes justified.[4] The results of these surveys reveal, if anything, that among the U.S. Muslim community, one finds the lowest percentage of Muslims who believe suicide bombings are justifiable to "defend Islam." Not only does the U.S. Muslim population overwhelmingly denounce suicide bombings, but the Pew report also finds that only 5 percent (1 percent very favorable and 4 percent somewhat favorable) of U.S. Muslims have favorable opinions about al-Qaeda.

Although some might argue that the moderation of values among Muslim Americans can be attributed to assimilation theories predicting that the values of immigrants will, over time, come to resemble those of the mainstream society, there are other factors that shape these perspectives as well. First, Muslim Americans enjoy great freedom to practice their own religion in the United States. Second, and as the Pew report documents, the Muslim-American community has enjoyed considerable socioeconomic success in the United States as well. In other words, Muslim Americans are very much invested in the structures that allow them religious freedom and economic prosperity. Muslim Americans are direct beneficiaries of American democracy and therefore are invested in preserving the status quo.

## MUSLIM AMERICANS AND THE "OTHER WITHIN"

9-11 solidified the prism through which mainstream society views its Muslim minority group and vice-versa. Although mainstream society sympathizes with Muslims, it continues to worry whether Muslims are so different that they could harm democracy either by espousing violence and holding on to illiberal values or by becoming a marginal, disaffected,

and balkanized group that remains on the fringes of democratic society. For mainstream society, it appears, consistent reassurance is needed to quell concerns about Islamic religiosity and identity. Reassurance is also needed by Muslims. As Muslims continue to engage mainstream society, there is a strong desire to know that the community will not be singled out and denied the opportunities to practice its civic rights and responsibilities. Muslim Americans fear that 9-11 has dealt them a tremendously significant blow—one that they may never overcome. These concerns and worries mediate the ways in which mainstream society and the Muslim American population interact with one another today. Yet, to what extent do Muslim religiosity, identity, and discrimination shape patterns of political engagement? Before we turn to this question, the next section offers an overview of these dimensions.

### Discrimination: Real and Perceived

The events of 9-11 exposed the deep misunderstanding that exists about Muslims and Islam more broadly. Mainstream Americans knew very little about the religion prior to 9-11. What little they did know was often based on the portrayals of the popular media—where Muslims were seen as terrorists well before 9-11. The horrific events of that day simply reinforced and solidified an existing perception. A long history of misrepresentation and the promotion of violent stereotypes about Muslims mark the popular American media.[5] As Susan Akram says, "Muslims and Arabs are consistently absent from that desirable group of ordinary people, families with social interactions, or outstanding members of communities such as scholars or writers or scientists." This process of stereotyping, Akram goes on to say, "has been so complete and so successful that film critics, most Americans and social commentators have barely noticed" (Akram 2002). Muslim Americans have often lamented the fact that the media is not fair when it comes to the way their community is represented. The Pew survey finds that 57 percent of the Muslim-American population believes the media is unfair and biased against them.

Through the lens of these types of portrayals, the American mainstream has come to learn about Islam and Muslims. A July 2005 Pew survey revealed[6] that 36 percent of the American population believes Islam encourages violence; another 36 percent reported that they have unfavorable opinions about Islam; and 25 percent say they had no opinion about the religion at all. When asked whether they knew what Allah and the Quran stood for, only half of the U.S. population could identify Allah as the word Muslims use to refer to God and the Quran as their holy book. In fact, those Americans who knew what Allah and the Quran stood for were more likely to have favorable opinions about Islam and Muslims.

It is against this backdrop that Muslim Americans continue to strive to exercise their political rights and voices. When asked by the Pew survey of 2007 to identify the most important problem facing U.S. Muslims today, 60 percent of response patterns among Muslims centered on issues pertaining to discrimination, misunderstandings, and stereotyping. Specifically, 19 percent reported that discrimination, racism, and prejudice were major problems. Another 15 percent reported the major challenge centered on their image as terrorists. Fourteen percent indicated that ignorance and misconceptions about Islam continue to be problematic. And 12 percent added that generalizations and stereotypes about all Muslims are of great concern. In fact, 53 percent of Muslims believe it is much more difficult to be a Muslim in the United States today, after the events of 9-11.

The Pew survey also reveals that, specifically because of their faith, 37 percent of the Muslim population in the United States worries about job security, 31 percent worries about being monitored, and 51 percent worries that women who wear the *hijab* (Muslim headscarf) are subjected to unfair treatment. A full quarter of the Muslim population has fallen victim to acts of discrimination. Twenty-six percent of U.S. Muslims report non-Muslims acting suspicious of them; 15 percent of Muslims have been called offensive names; and 9 percent of Muslims say they have been singled out by law enforcement. Yet, discrimination is not the only mode through which Muslims interact with mainstream society. A full third of the Muslim population reports members have been the recipients of support since the 9-11 attacks from members of the mainstream population. Nevertheless, as the response patterns indicate above, Muslim Americans remain rather vulnerable to the ways in which the mainstream society views and treats them.

### Religiosity

The Muslim-American population is as religious as its Christian counterpart. Forty percent of Muslim Americans attend mosque at least once a week. Christians in the general population report a 39 percent weekly attendance rate. Whereas 30 percent of Muslims take part in social activities at their mosques, 40 percent of the general population report doing so at their churches. Ninety percent of Muslims report that religion is very important or important in their lives, and 83 percent of the general population agreed. Sixty-one percent of the Muslim population prays daily, compared to 64 percent of the general population. Eighty-six percent of Muslims believe the Quran is the word of God, but 60 percent of Muslims believe there is more than one way to interpret Islam. Ninety-six percent of those sampled believe in one God, Allah, and 94 percent

of them believe in the prophet Mohammad. Three-fourths believe that giving *zakat* (charity) and fasting during the month of Ramadan are very important.[7]

The Pew Research Center defines Muslim religious commitment as attending mosque at least once a week, praying all five *salah* prayers,[8] and reporting that religion is "very important" in their lives. According to this definition, nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of Muslim Americans have a high level of religious commitment. About as many (26 percent) have a relatively low level of religious commitment, rarely engage in these practices, and generally regard religion as less important in their lives. A majority of Muslim Americans (51 percent) fall somewhere in between.[9]

### Identity

Muslim Americans are well integrated even while they remain devout and committed to their identities. When asked whether they consider themselves "Muslim first" or "American first," 47 percent reported that they considered themselves Muslim first, with another 28 percent saying American first; 18 percent volunteered to say both equally. That close to half the Muslim population chose to cite their religion as a primary marker of identity is similar to a finding that emerged when this same question was asked of Christians in the general population. There, 42 percent said they considered themselves Christian first. Christians, however, were more likely to identify as American as well, with 48 percent professing this primary identity.

Although Muslims are more likely to identify as Muslim first, they are also likely to associate with people from different religious backgrounds. Muslims do not socialize only with members of their own community. Only 12 percent of Muslims reported that all of their friends were Muslim. The remainder indicated that they have other friends from other backgrounds.[10]

Muslim Americans believe they can balance their religious commitments and life in the United States. When asked whether they felt there is a conflict in being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society, 63 percent did not believe there was a conflict. In the general population that number is at 42 percent. Finally, Muslims are more likely to favor integration rather than segmentation or marginalization. When asked whether Muslims coming to the United States today should mostly adopt American customs and ways of life, 43 percent of respondents said yes. However, 26 percent of respondents agreed with this statement: "Muslims coming to the United States today should mostly try to remain distinct from the larger American society." Another 16 percent volunteered that Muslims should try to accomplish both.[11]

## TESTS

How do levels of religiosity, chosen markers of identity, and perceptions of discrimination shape levels of American Muslim political engagement? More specifically, how do these factors shape the four patterns of political behavior and attitudinal predispositions important for our analysis here—voting, support for al-Qaeda, attitudes about assimilation, and levels of life satisfaction? Two popular strands of inquiry guide these tests. The first strand emanates from concerns held by mainstream society: Do Muslims who are more religious and who see themselves as Muslim first exhibit qualities that may be seen as undemocratic or threatening to democracy? Are they more likely to resist political participation? Are they more likely to support violent groups such as al-Qaeda? Are they more likely to be less satisfied and believe Muslims should remain distinct? For mainstream society, Muslim religion and identity are markers of "otherness." Do these markers matter for political engagement?

Although popular perceptions seem to hold that higher levels of Islamic religiosity may threaten democracy, it is important to note that existing theories on the role of religion in promoting useful political engagement maintain that religiosity—and especially church attendance—need not come at the expense of democracy. Scholars have long paid significant attention to the role of religious institutions in the political mobilization of citizens (Harris 1994; Verba et al. 1995; Wuthnow 1999; Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). Studies capturing the dynamics of church involvement have highlighted the power of the institution for mobilizing congregants. Verba and colleagues found that churchgoers are more likely to be engaged in political activities. Churches can potentially increase individual levels of civic skills, political efficacy, and political knowledge. They write, "The acquisition of such civic skills is not a function of SES [socioeconomic status] but depends on the frequency of church attendance and denomination of the church one attends."[12] This overflow from the religious to the political sphere has been documented in several studies analyzing the role of churches in political life (Peterson 1992; Calhoun-Brown 1996; Smidt 1999; Greenberg 2000). Some of these studies posit that instead of merely increasing levels of civic involvement, religious institutions can also serve as conduits for direct political mobilization. As Rosenstone and Hansen point out, "Involvement in organizations . . . promotes political participation by making people susceptible to mobilization. Politically, organizations stand between national and local political leaders and ordinary citizens."[13] In fact, new studies have found that civic skills gained in churches do not influence levels of political participation. Rather, churches influence political participation by directly recruiting congregants into political processes (Djupe and Grant

2001). In short, religiosity and church attendance can bolster political engagement in ways useful for democracy. Yet, current scholarly work stands at odds with common popular accounts of the link between Muslim religiosity and political engagement.

Further, in popular discourse there is also much concern about Muslim identity pronouncements. Here is it assumed that Muslim Americans who characterize themselves primarily as Muslim are more likely to lack loyalty to American democracy. This contention also undermines existing theoretical works on the subject matter. Although there is concern among scholars that a plethora of ethnic identities can have a negative impact on American cultural assimilation (Huntington 2004), critics of these formulations (de la Garza et al. 1996; Citrin et al. 2007) argue that ethnic identities should not threaten identification with American culture, values, and political institutions. They find that ethnic identities can be accompanied with strong patriotic commitments to the United States and its political institutions. However, the fear that Muslim identity and religiosity may impede democracy remains a strong concern of the general American population.

This strand of inquiry, deriving from mainstream American concerns, contrasts with voices emerging from within the Muslim community. In this second strand, members of the community are more likely to consider the impact of discrimination on patterns of political engagement rather than that of religiosity and identity on democracy. Muslim community leaders worry that discrimination may generate marginalization within the community. Discrimination, yet another reminder of Muslim "otherness" in the United States, can plausibly create barriers to participation. Yet, the scholarship is rather divided on the link between discrimination and political engagement. Scholars who have studied group consciousness and collective identity, for example, have found that discrimination promotes empowerment in ways that bode well for political engagement (Miller et al. 1981; Leighley 1996; Jamal 2005). Yet, others worry that groups who are discriminated against might become more disaffected and disadvantaged. Sears et al. refer to this as the "black discrimination model" (Sears et al. 2003; Schildkraut 2005).

To reconcile these conflicting accounts about the sources of and factors that may bolster or stifle political engagement, it is vital to test these claims empirically. Not only will these tests tell us if and how religiosity, identity, and discrimination matter for political engagement, but they will also help us to reconcile much of the confusion surrounding theoretical and popular accounts of minority and Muslim political integration. Further, the findings will also shed light on the mechanisms that may contribute to the dissatisfaction and alienation of Muslim Americans in ways that may pose problems for democracy more generally.

In order to conduct these tests, I used four dependent variables—political participation, support for al-Qaeda, assimilation, and satisfaction—to capture the different dimensions of political engagement.

### Political Participation: Voting

I first examine levels of political participation as demonstrated by the vote. Democracy requires the active and formal participation of all its citizens. Citizens who do not participate risk becoming marginalized. Interest representation requires active engagement with the political process. Do religiosity, identity, and discrimination mediate voting patterns? Are religious Muslims more likely to vote? Can religiosity and mosque attendance enhance participation among Muslims as it does for Christians? Or does religiosity not matter at all? Similarly, what role does identity play? Are those Muslims who see themselves as Muslim first less likely to participate? Finally, what role does discrimination play in influencing the vote? Does discrimination empower or disempower Muslims?

### Support for Terrorism: al-Qaeda

Second, I examine whether and how religiosity, identity, and discrimination mediate attitudes toward al-Qaeda. Although support for al-Qaeda is extremely low among American Muslims, with only 1 percent having very favorable views and another 4 percent having somewhat favorable views of the organization, it is important to understand the characteristics of those who hold positive evaluations for the group. Examining religiosity is important because much of the post-9-11 scrutiny of Muslim Americans has concentrated on mosques with the assumption that religious Muslims are more likely to be engaged in terrorism. Specifically, I ask whether those Muslims who are more religious, who see themselves as Muslim first, and who have been or worry about being discriminated against tend to have more favorable opinions about al-Qaeda.

### Assimilation: Should Muslims Adapt or Remain Distinct?

Third, I explore whether religiosity, identity, and discrimination among Muslim Americans shape attitudes about assimilation. Does religiosity breed a desire to remain less integrated? What about those Muslims who see themselves as Muslim first? Are they more likely to want to remain distinct? Could discrimination play a role? If Muslims attempting to integrate are met with discriminatory responses, will they become more likely to resist assimilation?

### Satisfaction: Are Muslims Satisfied with the Way Things Are Going in This Country?

Fourth, how do levels of religiosity, identity, and discrimination mediate levels of satisfaction? Are religious people less satisfied living in a more secular society like the United States? What about those individuals who see themselves as Muslim first? Do levels of discrimination truly structure levels of satisfaction with life the United States?

### Tests and Findings

I conducted logistical regression analysis to test many of the claims outlined above. To measure the vote, I used a question asked in the Pew Survey: "In the 2004 presidential election between George W. Bush and John Kerry, did things come up that kept you from voting, or did you happen to vote?" This variable is coded dichotomously with a simple yes or no response. To tap into support for al-Qaeda, I relied on the following question: "Overall, do you have favorable or unfavorable opinions of al-Qaeda?" Those who reported very favorable or somewhat favorable responses were placed in one category. Those who responded with unfavorable sentiments toward the group were placed in another category. Third, to tap into levels of satisfaction, Muslim Americans were asked "Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today?" Respondents were able to choose between being satisfied or dissatisfied. Finally, to gauge whether Muslims want to integrate more or remain distinct, I used the following question: "Which statement comes closer to your view: 'Muslims coming to the United States today should mostly adopt American customs and ways of life' or 'Muslims coming to the United States today should mostly try to remain distinct from the larger American society'?"

In all the models, I controlled for the following demographic factors: age, gender, income, education, and birth place (whether the respondent is an immigrant or United States born). In order to test whether identity, religiosity, and discrimination are linked to the dependent variables described above, I used the following measures. To capture religiosity, I adopted the scale constructed by the Pew research center to measure religious commitment (discussed above). This scale consists of prayer, mosque attendance, and the importance of religion in one's life.[14] To measure identity, I borrowed one question from the Pew survey, which asks respondents whether they see themselves as Muslim or American first. The measure of discrimination was also based on a single question: "Have you ever been discriminated against?" Finally, to tap into worries

about discrimination or levels of perceived discrimination, I constructed another index variable relying on three questions: (1) "How worried are you about not being hired for a job or promoted because of your religion?" (2) "How worried are you about your telephone calls and e-mails being monitored by the government because of your religion?" and (3) "How worried are you that women who wear the *hijab* in public will be treated poorly because it identifies them as Muslim?"[15] My findings are shown in table 3.1.

The factors that shape voting patterns among Muslim Americans appear to be demographic in nature. Specifically, those Muslims who are older, more educated, and born in the United States are more likely to have exercised their right to vote. These findings about education, age, and U.S. birth support what we already know about other immigrant groups and the general population. Education serves as a key resource for enhancing political efficacy and knowledge in ways that bode well for political participation more broadly. Further, older people are more likely than younger people to vote. Birth in the United States also facilitates voting because although immigrants may have to learn about the political process and in fact obtain citizenship rights, the U.S.-born population is already equipped to exercise the right to vote. Discrimination, identity, and religiosity have no significant effect on whether Muslims vote or not. In other words, these factors neither promote nor depress voting behavior.

When we examine support for al-Qaeda, we discover an intriguing finding. In this model, there are two significant variables: education and immigration status. Those less educated are more likely to support al-Qaeda, a pattern found among other Muslim communities cross-nationally as well. But more surprising is the finding that Muslims born in the United States are more likely to have favorable attitudes about al-Qaeda than Muslims born abroad. Although a very small percentage of immigrant and American-born Muslims are likely to support al-Qaeda, 0.06 percent and 3.6 percent, respectively, American Muslims are more likely to support al-Qaeda than their immigrant counterparts (see table 3.2). Even when race is controlled for, this finding persists. Perhaps this is because Muslims born abroad are more likely to comprehend the negative impact of al-Qaeda on the lives of citizens in the region; in other words, the results might suggest that ideological position is a function of physical experience—the more removed from the violence on the ground, the more the organization can be idealized. Further, not only does al-Qaeda harm people's lives in the Muslim world, but its presence also attracts those who are fighting the War on Terror, thereby exposing people and nations to horrible war scenarios. Although the percentage of those holding favorable views of al-Qaeda is quite low

TABLE 3.1
Logistic Regression Analysis: Political Engagement Vote, Favorable Opinions of al-Qaeda, Satisfaction, and Muslim Distinction

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Vote 2004 | Favorable opinions about al-Qaeda[a] | Satisfaction | Muslims should remain distinct |
| Gender (female) | 0.153 | −0.071 | −0.419 | 0.265 |
| | (0.298) | (0.653) | (0.266) | (0.276) |
| Income (low–high) | −0.002 | −0.075 | −0.010 | −0.064 |
| | (0.074) | (0.113) | (0.066) | (0.070) |
| Age (low–high) | 0.042*** | −0.008 | −0.030** | −0.008 |
| | (0.013) | (0.023) | (0.011) | (0.010) |
| Education (low–high) | 0.342*** | −.485** | 0.004 | −0.185* |
| | (0.099) | (0.182) | (0.082) | (0.091) |
| Immigrant status (immigrant) | −0.648* | −1.389** | 1.296*** | −0.783*** |
| | (0.317) | (0.587) | (0.312) | (0.277) |
| Muslim first | −0.076 | −0.567 | 0.054 | 1.123*** |
| | (0.326) | (0.617) | (0.298) | (0.280) |
| Religiosity scale (low–high) | −0.033 | −0.225 | 0.023 | 0.084 |
| | (0.053) | (0.127) | (0.042) | (0.050) |
| Discriminated against | 0.130 | 0.496 | −0.290 | 0.144 |
| | (0.347) | (0.722) | (0.320) | (0.307) |
| Worry index (low–high) | −0.007 | 0.093 | −0.282*** | 0.011 |
| | (0.055) | (0.115) | (0.049) | (0.049) |
| Constant | −2.018 | 4.316** | −3.262*** | 1.409 |
| | (1.189) | (1.635) | (1.014) | (1.024) |
| Observations | 615 | 661 | 750 | 774 |
| Percentage predicted correctly | 69% | — | 69% | 78% |

Robust standard errors in parentheses; *significant at $p < 0.05$; **significant at $p < 0.01$; ***significant at $p < 0.001$.

[a] *Note:* because only 5 percent of the Muslim-American sample has a favorable opinion of al-Qaeda, I also utilize a rare event logit for this model for robustness purposes. All the findings are robust. Further, percentage predicted correctly is not calculated for this equation because of the small number of positive observations.

(5 percent, compared to 95 percent who don't hold favorable opinions toward the group),[16] it certainly stands against conventional knowledge that immigrants are less likely to hold favorable views of the organization. Most antiterror policies have disproportionately focused on those Muslims coming from abroad. That the U.S.-born population is more

TABLE 3.2
Probability Shifts between Immigrant and Second-Generation Muslims

| | Vote 2004 | Support al-Qaeda | Satisfaction | Muslims should remain distinct |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| American-born Muslims (compared to immigrant Muslims)[a] | 12% Difference | 3% Difference | 24% Difference | 14% Difference |
| | Immigrant: 69% American born: 81% | Immigrant: 0.06% American born: 3.6% | Immigrant: 38% American born: 14% | Immigrant: 17% American born: 31% |
| | | American born 6 times more likely | Immigrants more than twice as likely to be satisfied | |

[a] Controlling other independent variables at their means.

likely to have favorable opinions of the organization stands at odds with popular perceptions. American-born Muslims should, according to assimilation models, be more integrated and hold the views of ordinary Americans. This finding might indeed stand against assimilation and acculturation models of incorporation. American-born Muslims who have favorable opinions about al-Qaeda may be more likely to identify with the organization as a means of asserting their hyphenated American identity. Whereas first-generation immigrants are more likely to seek and desire socioeconomic incorporation, second-generation immigrants are more likely to be invested in asserting their ethnic identities (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

This finding is supported when we look at the results of the model examining those who believe Muslims coming to this country should remain distinct. Those with lower education and those who consider themselves Muslim first are more likely to support the statement. Further, the American-born Muslim population, compared to the immigrant Muslim population, is also more likely to believe that Muslims should remain distinct by a likelihood of 14 percent (see table 3.2). Those less educated may be more marginalized and as a result support less assimilation. Those who think of themselves as Muslim first are also more likely to desire a distinct identity disassociated from the mainstream. The evidence appears to suggest that while asserting a Muslim identity does not matter for voting patterns, opinions about al-Qaeda, or levels of general satisfaction, it does matter for attitudes about assimilation. Those who consider themselves Muslim first are more likely to desire less assimilation. But most surprising, again, is the finding that U.S.-born Muslims are more likely to desire distinction. One can argue that American Muslims are more likely to want to assert their own identity—one that is separate from the mainstream. Yet and once again, this stands contrary to what we know about cohort effects on acculturation and assimilation. The U.S.-born population should be more "American" than its predecessors. Although more research is needed to understand these findings, it may appear that U.S.-born Muslims believe remaining distinct is more appealing if not more advantageous than incorporation. Perhaps they, as U.S.-born citizens, have the highest expectations of what citizenship rights should afford them. As a result, they are most affected by the overall climate, which sees and views Muslims as outsiders. Table 3.3 shows that U.S.-born Muslims are in fact more likely to report that they have been discriminated against than their immigrant counterparts by a margin higher than 100 percent.[17]

These findings substantiate what other scholars have learned while studying the tendencies among the second generation. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that "segmented assimilation" represents many of the

TABLE 3.3
Discrimination Rates and Birth Place

| | Discriminated against (No) | Discriminated against (Yes) | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Born in United States | 59% | 41% | 100% |
| Immigrant | 82% | 18% | 100% |

trajectories shaping the incorporation of the second generation in the United States. "Unequal modes of incorporation," they maintain, shape the extent to which immigrants may enrich society or find that their aspirations are blocked, becoming therefore more poised to experience downward mobility. In a subsequent study, Portes and Rumbaut further examined the sources of downward mobility among second-generation immigrants. They found that there are elements of dissonant acculturation linked to these experiences. They labeled this process, drawing on the earlier work of Irving Child, "reactive ethnic formation." Groups that experience significant levels of "extreme discrimination and derogation of their national origins are likely to embrace them ever more fiercely; those received more favorably shift to American identities with greater speed and less pain" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Thus, how the second generation is received determines the extent to which the second generation adopts oppositional attitudes toward the mainstream. This has consequences for social mobility more generally.[18]

Finally, when we examine the sources that influence levels of satisfaction, we find a similar trend to that documented above. Muslims born in the United States are less satisfied with life in the United States than are immigrants. In fact, immigrants are almost twice as likely to be more satisfied than American-born Muslims (31 percent to 14 percent). Again, this confirms much of the speculation about this finding (see table 3.2). The index variable capturing worry about specific discriminatory outcomes shapes levels of satisfaction as well; those most worried are least satisfied. Finally, the younger generation appears to be more satisfied than the older generation. Again, what emerges in this analysis is a story about dissatisfaction among those groups that, according to our conventional wisdom, should be more satisfied. The U.S.-born Muslim population should be afforded opportunities and privileges that their immigrant counterparts don't possess; that they are systematically less satisfied illustrates that, at some level, they are either most disappointed with life in the United States or they have higher expectations than their immigrant counterparts.

## CONCLUSION

The Pew Survey results reveal that there are significant similarities between the Muslim and Christian populations in the United States. These similarities encompass all facets of political, social, religious, and civic life. However, differences emerge as well, especially when we examine response patterns pertaining to evaluations of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. The markers of distinction that relegate Muslims to an elusive category of "other"—identity, religiosity, and discrimination—are not systematically pertinent in explaining patterns of Muslim-American political engagement. Religiosity is not significant in any of the equations. There is nothing unique about Islamic religiosity, rituals, or practice that either promotes or depresses support for al-Qaeda, attitudes about assimilation, levels of satisfaction, or the exercise of one's right to vote. Discrimination is important in one of the models that examine levels of satisfaction. Those who worry more about the impact of discrimination are more likely to be dissatisfied. Furthermore, identity matters in only one of the equations as well: those who see themselves as Muslim first believe that Muslims should remain more distinct from the mainstream. Yet, this identity is not salient for support of al-Qaeda, voting behavior, or levels of satisfaction. The particularity of Muslims—their identity and their levels of religiosity—have little bearing on political and social integration. Muslims are far more likely to resemble the mainstream population in many of its characteristics.

Most surprising is the systematic finding that emerges in three models: American-born Muslims are more likely to have favorable views of al-Qaeda, be less satisfied, and support a distinct Muslim identity. Something appears to have gone wrong with the acculturation/assimilation script. Second- and third-generation immigrants should have less favorable opinions about al-Qaeda, be more satisfied, and desire more integration than their immigrant counterparts. That U.S.-born Muslims are more likely to consider themselves victims of discrimination (table 3.3) lends credence to the argument that American-born Muslims are becoming more and more disaffected as a political and social community.[19] It could be the case that the U.S.-born Muslim population feels the burden of a post–9-11 backlash in ways that the immigrant population does not. It is not that the U.S.-born population has suffered more, but perhaps it is less likely to tolerate the backlash. The immigrant population may accept the backlash as the price of enjoying a more prosperous life in America.

Although the democratic acculturation script might appear to have gone wrong when the incorporation trajectory of the second generation is examined, the findings might also suggest that this disaffection of the

second generation is indeed part and parcel of the Americanization process. To be American is to better understand and assert one's rights and to voice dissent in the face of nondemocratic treatment. Certainly, the second generation appears to be more likely to resist such treatment, assert its identity, and voice its discontent. The findings of this chapter corroborate studies of the second generation among Latinos and Asian Americans. It is the second generation members that are more likely to be assertive of their rights. Indeed, the process of voice and dissent is one of the great pillars of American democracy. In this regard, Muslim Americans, it appears, are joining other immigrant groups in laying claim to the American democratic experience.

## APPENDIX: DATA QUESTIONS AND CODING USED IN LOGISTICAL REGRESSION ANALYSIS

1. Satisfaction: Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today?
   A. Satisfied
   B. Dissatisfied

2. Which comes closest to your view?
   A. Muslims coming to the United States today should mostly adopt American customs and ways of life.
   B. Muslims coming to the United States today should mostly try to remain distinct from the larger American society.
   C. Both
   D. Neither
   E. Don't know/Decline to answer

3. How worried are you . . .
   About not being hired for a job or promoted because of your religion?
   A. Very worried
   B. Somewhat worried
   C. Not too worried
   D. Not worried at all
   E. Not sure/Decline to answer

   About your telephone and e-mails being monitored by the government because of your religion?
   A. Very worried
   B. Somewhat worried
   C. Not too worried
   D. Not worried at all
   E. Not sure/Decline to answer

   That women who wear the headcover or *hijab* in public will be treated poorly because it identifies them as Muslim?
   A. Very worried
   B. Somewhat worried
   C. Not too worried
   D. Not worried at all
   E. Not sure/Decline to answer

4. Thinking more generally—not just about the past 12 months—have you ever been the victim of discrimination as a Muslim living in the United States?
   A. Yes, I have been the victim of discrimination.
   B. No, I have not been the victim of discrimination.
   C. Don't know/decline to answer

5. On average, how often do you attend the mosque or Islamic center for *salah* and *Jum'ah* prayer?
   A. More than once a week
   B. Once a week for *Jum'ah* prayer
   C. Once or twice a month
   D. A few times a year, especially for the *Eid*
   E. Seldom
   F. Never
   G. Don't know/Decline to answer

6. How important is religion in your life?
   A. Very important
   B. Somewhat important
   C. Not too important
   D. Not important at all
   E. Don't know/Decline to answer

7. Concerning the daily *salah* or prayer, do you, in general . . .
   A. Pray all five *salah* daily
   B. Make some of the five *salah* daily
   C. Occasionally make *salah*
   D. Only make *Eid* prayers
   E. Never pray
   F. Don't know/Decline to answer

8. Do you think of yourself first as an American or first as a Muslim?
   A. American
   B. Muslim
   C. Both (Volunteer)
   D. Neither (Volunteer)

9. Overall, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of al-Qaeda?
   A. Very favorable
   B. Somewhat favorable
   C. Somewhat unfavorable
   D. Very unfavorable
   E. Don't know/Decline to answer

10. Last year, that is in 2006, was your total family income from all sources before taxes . . .
    A. Less than $20,000
    B. Over $20,000; below $30,000
    C. Over $30,000; below $50,000
    D. Over $50,000; below $75,000
    E. Over $75,000; below $100,000
    F. Over $100,000

11. What is the last grade or class that you completed in school?

12. In the 2004 presidential election between George W. Bush and John Kerry, did things come up that kept you from voting, or did you happen to vote?
    A. Yes, voted
    B. No, didn't vote
    C. Other/Don't know

## NOTES

1. Pew Research Center, Muslim Americans: Mostly Middle Class and Mainstream, available at http://www.allied-media.com/AM/mosque_study.htm. May 2007.

2. By focusing on the assimilation experiences of Muslim Americans, this chapter is predominantly concerned with the Muslim immigrant experience.

3. The Pew Research Center estimates that the U.S. Muslim population is at 2.5 million. Muslim Organizations such as the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) place the size of the community near 10 million. Most scholars who work on the Muslim-American community place the number at close to 6 million.

4. The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other: 13 Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey. Pew Research Center, 2006. See http://pew global.org/reports/pdf/253.pdf.

5. See Michael Suleiman, "Stereotypes, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The Impact on Arab-American Relations," *Journal of Arab Affairs* April 2002; Daniel Mandel, "Muslims on the Silver Screen," *Middle East Quarterly* Spring 2001; Mark Tessler and Dan Corstange, "How Should Americans Understand Arab Political Attitudes: Combating Stereotypes with Public Opinion Data from the Middle East," *Journal of Social Affairs* Winter 2002; Jack Shaheen, "Bad

Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* July 2003; Fawaz Gerges, "Islam and Muslims in the Mind of America," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* July 2003.

6. http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=252.

7. All data presented here comes from the Muslim American Report: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream. Pew Research Center, 2006. http://pewresearch.org/assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf.

8. Muslims are required to pray five times a day at dawn (*fajr*), noon (*thuhr*), afternoon (*asr*), early evening (*maghrib*), and night (*isha*).

9. See Pew Report on Muslim Americans, available at http://pewresearch.org/assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Verba et al. 1995, 282.

13. Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 87.

14. These dimensions of religiosity have a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70.

15. These dimensions of worry have a Cronbach's alpha of 0.65.

16. It is not known what levels of the general population support al-Qaeda. If we were to survey the general mainstream population, we might find that 5 percent of the general population, too, have favorable opinions of al-Qaeda. Surprisingly, after the Oklahoma City bombings in 1995, a hypothetical question was asked of the mainstream population: "Is it ever justified for citizens to take violent action against the United States government?" Nine percent of Americans said yes. "Two Stories Found in One Poll" ABC News. May, 23, 2007. http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=3203514.

17. Some might assume that these findings tell us more about the African-American Muslim experience. When I control for race, however, I find no independent effect of blackness on these data. It appears that these findings are pertinent among all U.S.-born Muslims, blacks and nonblacks alike.

18. Portes and Rumbaut found that Mexican Americans in California (while intense debates about immigration reform ensued in the 1990s) developed many of the reactive ethnic formation attributes. Patricia Fernandez-Kelly and Schauffler also find this pattern applicable to the Nicaraguan-American experience as well (Fernandez-Kelley and Schauffler 1994).

19. Others might argue that immigrants are not as forthcoming as the U.S.-born community in their responses about support for al-Qaeda or their desire to remain distinct. But this argument, although plausible, is not substantiated by the available evidence. When examining one of the more neutral dependent variables—Levels of Satisfaction—we still find that immigrants are more satisfied than the U.S. born.

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