

THE POWER OF PRESIDENTIAL PROPAGANDA:
EXECUTIVE INFLUENCE ON THE INCREASE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA
IN THE UNITED STATES

By

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Abstract

During his 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump used a variety of platforms to release derogatory statements regarding Muslims. Through campaign rallies, speeches, and Twitter, Trump's messages quickly spread across the country. At the same time, the amount of hate crimes against the Islamic community in the United States rose, reaching its peak in November 2016 after Trump won the election. This project sets out to determine the reasoning behind this increase in Islamophobia. It studies the role of Muslims as the "other," how Muslims are portrayed as an out-group, and the influence the Trump Campaign had on the increased amount of domestic Islamophobia in the United States.

Xenophobia: fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign

-Merriam-Webster¹

Introduction: What is Islamophobia? What Causes It?

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the concept of “the-Muslim-as-the-other” was born in America. Muslims had existed in America and around the world for centuries, practicing a peaceful religion, and adhering to the rules of G-d given through his Prophet Muhammad. In 2001 however, Muslims were suddenly thrust into an unwanted spotlight. Neighbors and colleagues, friends and strangers, began to fear them and question their motives for living in America. What is the song that calls them all to mosque? What are the women hiding under those scarfs? When are they going to attack next?

Changing attitudes towards Muslims are reflected in the FBI’s annual hate crime report. Since 1995, the FBI has kept track of and published a report detailing the amount of hate crimes directed towards specific demographic groups in America. When comparing hate crimes in 2000 and 2001: “incidents targeting people, institutions and businesses identified with the Islamic faith increased from 28 in 2000 to 481 in 2001 – a jump of 1,600 percent. Muslims previously had been among the least-targeted religious groups.”² It is important to note that the crimes included in the FBI’s report are only those *reported* by victims. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that many unreported crimes also occurred.

Despite the paranoia building around their religious practices, Muslims expressing their religious beliefs in the United States are not breaking the law. Muslims have been in the United

¹ *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "Xenophobia," February 15, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/xenophobia>.

² Curt Anderson, "FBI: Hate Crimes Vs. Muslims Rise," Associated Press, November 25, 2002, accessed February 22, 2018, <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/2002/FBI-Hate-Crimes-Vs-Muslims-Rise/id-5e249fb6e4dc184720e3428c9d0bd046>.

States since colonial times, some being brought over as slaves from Africa. Referred to as Mahommedans, some gained freedom and became integrated into American society. When the United States was still operating under the Articles of Confederation, Thomas Jefferson wrote the 1786 Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which “was designed to protect all faiths ... the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and the Mahommedan.”³ Three years later, James Madison would use this as inspiration for the First Amendment of the American Constitution, which guarantees “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”⁴ Even with this declaration and the history behind it, America is a Christo-normative society. Many of our values stem from Judeo-Christian roots, so much so that the average American might not even realize it. For example, one etiological story for saying “bless you” after someone sneezes comes from Medieval Rome during the bubonic plague. Pope Gregory I advised his congregants to say “G-d bless you” after hearing a sneeze, an early symptom of the plague, so that G-d may bless the person with good health.⁵ The consequence of living in a Christo-normative society, is that anything outside the “norm,” causes fear.

Fear of the “other” is seen in modern America through the treatment of many minority groups, particularly Muslims. Islamophobia can be defined as the irrational fear of Islam or Muslims based on the notion of “otherness.” Where does this “otherness” originate from? Who defines a group as “the other”?

³ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at Islamic Society of Baltimore" (address, Islamic Society of Baltimore, Baltimore), February 3, 2016, accessed March 11, 2018, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/02/03/remarks-president-islamic-society-baltimore>.

⁴ U.S. Const. amend. I.

⁵ ""G-d Bless You" Is Born | History Channel on Foxtel," History Channel, June 08, 2017, accessed February 23, 2018, <https://www.historychannel.com.au/articles/god-bless-you-is-born/>.

Anti-Muslim assaults at highest level since 2001

Anti-Muslim assaults reported to the FBI

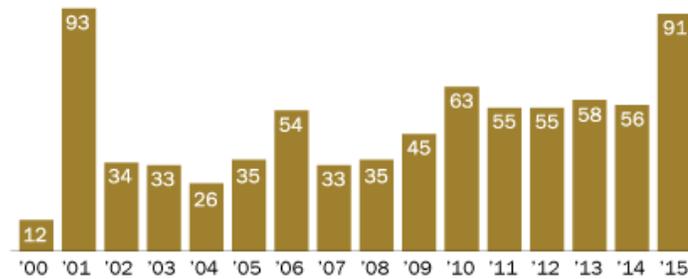


Figure 1. From Anti-Muslim assaults reach 9/11-era levels, FBI data show.⁶

As September 11, 2001 moved farther and farther into the distant past, and the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan began to die down, the hostile attitudes towards Muslims in the United States began to lessen. The amount of Islamophobic incidents in the United States fluctuated, with a general downward trend in the past decade. Recently, this trend has reversed. This can be seen from a study published by Pew Research Center on November 21, 2016.⁷ As outlined in Figure 1, the amount of assaults on Muslims in the United States in 2015 was only two less than the assaults reported in 2001, post-9/11. This graph does not account for other types of Islamophobic attacks: “The FBI reported 257 incidents of anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2015, a 67% increase from the previous year.”⁸ After almost a decade of decreasing Islamophobia, what reignited this spark of hatred against Muslims?

In tandem with the FBI’s reported rise in anti-Muslim attacks was the beginning of a new era of American politics. On June 16, 2015, then-civilian Donald Trump announced his candidacy

⁶ Katayoun Kishi, "Anti-Muslim Assaults Reach 9/11-era Levels, FBI Data Show," Pew Research Center, November 21, 2016, accessed October 1, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/21/anti-muslim-assaults-reach-911-era-levels-fbi-data-show/>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

for President of the United States. During the 2016 election cycle, Trump capitalized on the “fear of the other” to his own electoral gain. Groups targeted by Trump include but are not limited to women, immigrants, refugees, Hispanics, the LGBTQA+ community, Jews, and Muslims.

Throughout the 2016 election cycle, the amount of violence on the Muslim community increased. Attacks occurred in mosques and community centers; women were harassed for wearing the hijab; and men were attacked by passers-by.⁹ This violence results in the following research question: How big of an impact has the Trump Administration’s treatment of Muslims in America and around the world had on domestic Islamophobia?

This research paper will explore the origins of “otherness,” particularly how “otherness” relates to the American-Muslim community. By comparing data about domestic Islamophobia with specific instances of anti-Muslim political rhetoric, it will provide insight both to why and how Muslim-Americans feel alienated in their own country, as well as why the United States government has failed repeatedly to prevent hate crimes.

As mentioned above this paper seeks to answer several important research questions:

- Where does this “otherness” originate from? Who defines a group as “the other”?
- After almost a decade of decreasing Islamophobia, what reignited this spark of hatred against Muslims?
- How big of an impact has the Trump Administration’s treatment of Muslims in America and around the world had on domestic Islamophobia?

This research topic is important for scholars in political science because it studies the influence political leaders can have on the views of their constituent populations.

⁹ "Islamophobia," The Huffington Post, accessed September 10, 2017, <http://testkitchen.huffingtonpost.com/islamophobia/>.

Theory: Expressions of Islamophobia in the United States

“Otherness,” as a concept derives from the idea of an in-group, a group which an individual belongs to and supports. Contrary to the in-group is the out-group, the “other.” In his book *The Nature of Prejudice*, psychologist Gordon Allport discusses in-groups, remarking that “in-groups are often recreated to fit the needs of individuals, and when the needs are strongly aggressive ... the redefinition of the in-group may be primarily in terms of the hated out-groups.”¹⁰ In-groups are psychologically created phenomenon, determined by one’s family, neighborhood, nation, race, and/or religion. Members of an in-group share a common trait, while members of a particular in-group’s out-group do not fall within the common trait shared by the in-group. If the in-group feels threatened it may resort to antagonism of the out-group: “members of an in-group all use the term *we* with the same essential significance [belonging] ... Hostility toward out-groups helps strengthen our sense of belonging, but it is not required.”¹¹ In-groups that engage in hostile actions toward out-groups define the out-group as the “other.”

When examining Islamophobia in the United States, two major contributors that dictate who belongs to the in-group and how they perceive the out-group (Muslims) are the media and the government. As a crisis unfolds, rhetoric presented by newsmen and politicians is especially influential on the views of the public.¹²

¹⁰ Gordon W. Allport, "Formation of In-Groups," in *The Nature of Prejudice*, 25th Anniversary Edition ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Chris Allen, *A Review of the Evidence Relating to the Representation of Muslims and Islam in the British Media*, University of Birmingham, October 24, 2012, accessed October 22, 2017, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/IASS/news-events/MEDIA-ChrisAllen-APPGEvidence-Oct2012.pdf>.

In the immediate aftermath of September 11, the amount of newspaper articles about Muslims surged across the Western world. According to Allen (2012), these articles framed Muslims as a homogenous group, all possessing the same attributes and characteristics. Due to the nature of the attacks, many of the articles were about terrorism, and many of the attributes and characteristics “given” to Muslims were negative. This negativity can be seen in media word choice. When describing terrorists, the media used nouns like *extremist*, *Islamist*, and *militant*, and adjectives like *radical*, *fanatical*, and *fundamentalist*. While these words are correct to describe terrorists, they are not applicable to the majority of the 1.8 billion Muslims in the world.¹³ Despite their non-applicability, the negative connotations implied from these news reports can lead readers to believe that the extremists they are seeing on their television screens are representative of the entire Muslim population. Establishing what is the “norm” and what is the “other” is often left up to cues from the news media and their style of reporting.

Television programs that are not news related, such as shows and movies, are also contributing to this problem. President Barack Obama addressed the issue of Muslim representation on TV in a speech he gave on February 3, 2016 at the Islamic Society of Baltimore: “many [Americans] only hear about Muslims and Islam from the news after an act of terrorism, or in distorted media portrayals in TV or film, all of which gives this hugely distorted impression.”¹⁴ Obama suggests that TV shows should portray Muslim characters as everyday people. A Muslim character can exist outside the role of national security.

¹³ Chris Allen, *A Review of the Evidence Relating to the Representation of Muslims and Islam in the British Media*, University of Birmingham, October 24, 2012, accessed October 22, 2017, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/IASS/news-events/MEDIA-ChrisAllen-APPGEvidence-Oct2012.pdf>.

¹⁴ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at Islamic Society of Baltimore" (address, Islamic Society of Baltimore, Baltimore), February 3, 2016, accessed March 11, 2018,

As is evident with Obama's speech, intertwined with media coverage are reports from the government. Governmental rhetoric has contributed to rising amounts of Islamophobia in the past. For instance, Feffer (2012) compares the idea of Western intervention to "fix" the Middle East and Islam with the Christian Crusades of 1095-1291. American politicians have expressed anti-Islamic sentiment in the past through counterterrorism efforts and policies.¹⁵

While President Obama expressed his support of the Muslim-American community on various occasions throughout his presidency, his former opponent Mitt Romney did the opposite at a 2007 Las Vegas fundraiser. Mansoor Ijaz, an American-born Muslim who attended the fundraiser, asked Romney about his intentions to include Muslims in his Cabinet after Romney expressed his goals to strengthen American national security and foreign policy due to radical jihadism in the Middle East. Romney's response, that "based on the numbers of American Muslims [as a percentage] in our population, I cannot see that a Cabinet position would be justified,"¹⁶ did not sit well with Ijaz, a politically active businessman. In the 1990s Ijaz negotiated in both Sudan and Kashmir on behalf of the Clinton Administration. He felt that the best way to actively reach the Muslim-American community was through political representation. While not outwardly Islamophobic, Romney's claim that there are not enough Muslims in the US to warrant Cabinet representation has Islamophobic undertones. This private fundraiser was not covered by the press, but Ijaz made a point to publish Romney's rhetoric online through the Christian Science Monitor.

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/02/03/remarks-president-islamic-society-baltimore>.

¹⁵ Inc. Ogden Publications, "The Potential Causes of Islamophobia - Politics - Utne Reader," Utne, August 2012, accessed October 22, 2017, <https://www.utne.com/politics/islamophobia-zm0z1208zwar?pageid=1#PageContent1>.

¹⁶ Mansoor Ijaz, "A Muslim Belongs in the Cabinet," The Christian Science Monitor, November 27, 2007, accessed March 11, 2018, <https://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1127/p09s01-coop.html>.

In the eighth year of his presidency, Obama's speech at the Islamic Society of Baltimore reiterates the importance of religious freedom and diversity to the foundation of the United States. He insists, "we have to reject a politics that seeks to manipulate prejudice or bias, and targets people because of religion. ... the notion that America is at war with Islam ignores the fact that the world's religions are a part of who we are."¹⁷ Obama's speech also mentions the "inexcusable political rhetoric against Muslim Americans;"¹⁸ this came in the wake of the 2016 election. No politician has relied on fear of the other as much as Donald Trump. He capitalized on the fears of voters by frequently expressing Islamophobia, with statements like "I think Islam hates us" and "we're having problems with the Muslims."¹⁹ His proposal for a ban on Muslim immigration to the United States resulted in massive resistance from his political opponents. However, this resistance did not stop Trump from signing an Executive Order on January 27, 2017 banning immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries.²⁰

After his win in November 2016, the anxiety and paranoia that surrounded Muslims post-9/11 returned. According to an Al-Jazeera opinion piece published the day after the election, "He [Trump] delivered what the market demanded, and doubled down on his anti-Muslim rhetoric. He fed the Islamophobia his loud and angry base demanded ... the highest office in government

¹⁷ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at Islamic Society of Baltimore" (address, Islamic Society of Baltimore, Baltimore), February 3, 2016, accessed March 11, 2018, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/02/03/remarks-president-islamic-society-baltimore>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Jenna Johnson and Abigail Hauslohner, "'I Think Islam Hates Us': A Timeline of Trump's Comments about Islam and Muslims," *The Washington Post*, May 20, 2017, accessed January 25, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/05/20/i-think-islam-hates-us-a-timeline-of-trumps-comments-about-islam-and-muslims/?utm_term=.6d7e2f4c4cec.

²⁰ Ibid.

authorizes discrimination and violence against Muslim Americans.”²¹ The Islamophobic incidents which have occurred throughout the first year of the Trump presidency provide evidence to this claim.

This research experiment will examine the rhetoric of the Trump campaign throughout the 2016 election. It will then evaluate if this rhetoric corresponds with any increase or decrease in Islamophobic events across the United States. The consequences of Islamophobia lead to a divided country. Perception of “otherness” as demonstrated with in-group/out-group mentalities has the potential to create sectarian policies. To maintain a united nation, the United States – particularly its government and its Executive – must demonstrate a mentality of unity.

Hypothesis

The 2016 presidential campaign of Donald Trump gained much of its electoral support by capitalizing on the fears of the electorate. Unfortunately, these fears were mostly about other groups of people. According to Enid Logan, professor at the University of Minnesota, “Trump now elevates and legitimizes the most base instincts and overt bigotry of certain portions of the electorate. ... supporters cheer on the insults he [Trump] hurls at his opponents and the rambling, nationalist, anti-immigrant screeds he is prone to deliver.”²² Published before November, Logan’s article predicts that Trump will lose his campaign, because the number of groups he alienates will come together to vote against him.

²¹ Khaled A. Beydoun, "The Islamophobia President," *Politics | Al Jazeera*, November 09, 2016, accessed February 23, 2018, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/11/donald-trump-islamophobia-president-161109065355945.html>.

²² Enid Logan, "Anger Management," *RSA: 21st Century Enlightenment* 162, no. 5566 (2016): accessed March 26, 2018.

While a voter may not consciously be thinking about in-groups and out-groups while casting a ballot, individuals are unconsciously trained to favor their own in-groups. Implicit bias, or “the stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner”²³ are biases that an individual may not be aware they possess. These associations depend on in-group/out-group classifications, and “We generally tend to hold implicit biases that favor our own in-group.”²⁴ Negative exposure to an out-group one may not be familiar with results in an unconscious bias against that out-group.

Allport’s theory of in-group/out-group and its role in creating “otherness” can be tested with Islamophobia. Donald Trump’s speeches, comments, and tweets fuel the idea of a Muslim out-group. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: Rhetorical responses from Donald Trump regarding or directed at Muslims and/or Islam correlate with the increase of Islamophobic attacks in the United States. This hypothesis will be tested using data on Islamophobic attacks, Trump’s words and tweets, and partisan public opinion polls.

Tracking Islamophobia and its causes is important for both domestic and international politics. Domestically, the United States is a country that preserves freedom for its citizens regardless of religion or race. As stated in the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; ... nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the

²³ *Understanding Implicit Bias*, The Ohio State University, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, 2015, accessed April 19, 2018, <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

equal protection of laws.”²⁵ Muslim-Americans are United States citizens and therefore deserve equal protection of law.

Internationally, the United States subscribes to the United Nations’ Responsibility to Protect (R2P) policy. At the 2005 World Summit, the United States signed the R2P, agreeing to protect its population from “genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.”²⁶ R2P is designed in a three-pillar framework, with the third pillar stating, “When a state is unable or unwilling to protect its populations or is perpetrating these crimes, the international community has a responsibility to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner to prevent or halt the commission of mass atrocities.”²⁷ This includes protecting Muslim immigrants and refugees fleeing from violence around the globe, most recently in Syria and Iraq.

Research Design

The design for this project is largely based on self-reported data. Therefore, one must keep in mind that the figures presented represent the lowest possible number of attacks and abuses. It is possible that many unreported attacks also occurred, but left unreported they are not included in the data set. This project is trying to show the connection between what Donald Trump says and how the American public reacts.

The above hypothesis will be tested using data collected on Islamophobic attacks throughout America in 2016. The number of attacks per month will be recorded and graphed. After determining the months with the largest number of attacks, it is necessary to look for major

²⁵ U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1.

²⁶ "Clarifying the Second Pillar of the Responsibility to Protect: Building State Capacity to Protect Populations from Atrocity Crimes," *At a Glance: An Educational Tool by the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

events that may have triggered an increase in negative reactions. For the sake of this study, major events can be political or hostile. A political event can be defined as the win of a candidate or the passing of a relevant law. A hostile event can be defined as a physical attack on the United States, resulting in casualties.

During an election year, presidential candidates are likely to respond to major events that affect the United States. The responses from Trump that correspond with the major events in 2016 may give insight into the reactions Trump's base supporters had about the events. If the hypothesis is correct, the months with the most severe Islamophobic statements from Trump should correspond to the months with the most amount of Islamophobic incidents. Due to smartphones and the Internet, the speed at which the American public has access to news reports is at an all-time high. Therefore, any Islamophobic attacks triggered by Trump's statements should occur within a month of his responses.

Donald Trump uses a variety of platforms to express his message including interviews, speeches, and tweets. After examining these platforms and looking for patterns in the messages he is broadcasting and implying, it is necessary to look at the types of online responses received. Those with similar views may see Trump's public comments as authorization to express and act upon their own views.

The next step will be to examine partisan divides through public opinion polls. Due to different news outlets used by Republicans and Democrats, the two groups are likely to have different views on Muslims in America. As president, Donald Trump is the leader of the Republican Party. If the amount of Republican discontent for Muslims increased but the amount of Democratic discontent for Muslims decreased, the hypothesis that Trump's language supports the idea of Muslims as the "other" is valid. However, if the amount of Republican discontent for

Muslims decreased but the amount of Democratic discontent for Muslims increased, the hypothesis is false.

The interpretation of Trump's words differs depending on the listener's party affiliation. This can be shown through media bias: the idea that any news received from a network with the same political views as the viewer is correct, and any news received from a network with different political views as the viewer is incorrect. Media bias was tested in an experiment documented in *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*. The experiment presented media from two news channels. Fox News was used to represent the conservative viewpoint, which is generally associated with the Republican Party. CNN was used to represent the liberal viewpoint, which is generally associated with the Democratic Party. The experiment began with two groups of liberals viewing the same news story. One group was told the story came from Fox News, while the other group was told the story came from CNN. When asked about bias presented in the news report, the group who thought they watched Fox News mentioned a conservative bias while the group who thought they watched CNN thought the information was presented neutrally. This experiment was repeated with two groups of conservatives and produced the opposite results. The conservative group who thought they watched Fox News believed the information was neutral while the group who thought they watched CNN mentioned a liberal bias.²⁸

The above media biases can be transferred to news coverage of Donald Trump. Presentations about Trump are filtered to fit their audiences. A conservative receiving news about Trump from a conservative news station is likely to see a positive spin on the information.

²⁸ William H. Flanigan et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 13th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE/CQ Press, 2015).

On the opposite side of the spectrum, a liberal receiving (the same) news about Trump from a liberal news station is likely to see a negative spin on the information. Since both groups are taking in the same information differently, both groups will respond in the matter that best fits their ideological viewpoint.

One important methodological problem in this research is the inability to distinguish between the timing of Islamophobic actions and reactions. Some Islamophobic actions have nothing to do with Trump or with his statements. However, anti-Muslim sentiment produced by Trump validates anti-Muslim feelings in the people who hold them. If the hypothesis is correct, the months with Trump's most explicit comments will correlate with an increase in Islamophobic attacks.

Data and Analysis

Recording Islamophobic incidents is difficult because much of the data relies on self-reporting. Despite this roadblock, several sites have created databases tracking the amount of hate crimes directed towards Arabs and Muslims.

The Huffington Post compiled a database of Islamophobic incidents across the US in the year 2016. Information from this database came from news reports and firsthand stories. Based on *reported* incidents, the Huffington Post recorded a total of 385 incidents. The accounts were separated by month and given labels corresponding to five different types of Islamophobic attacks: Aggression, Bigotry, Discrimination, Policy, and Rhetoric. Some events were labeled

with multiple categories. November was the peak month, with a total of 47 *reported* incidents; June had the second largest number of incidents, with 42 in total.²⁹

A similar trend was published by ProPublica, a non-profit organization dedicated to investigative journalism. ProPublica recorded 67 attacks on Islamic Centers/mosques during the year 2016. These events were divided into nine, more specific, categories: Vandalism and Property Damage; Threats by Phone, Mail, or Online; In-Person Threats; Protests; Harassment; Arson; Physical Assault; Gunshot; and Other. The peak months for attacks on Islamic Centers only - excluding other Islamophobic attacks - were November with 15 attacks and June with 13 attacks.³⁰ These are the same peak months published by the Huffington Post.

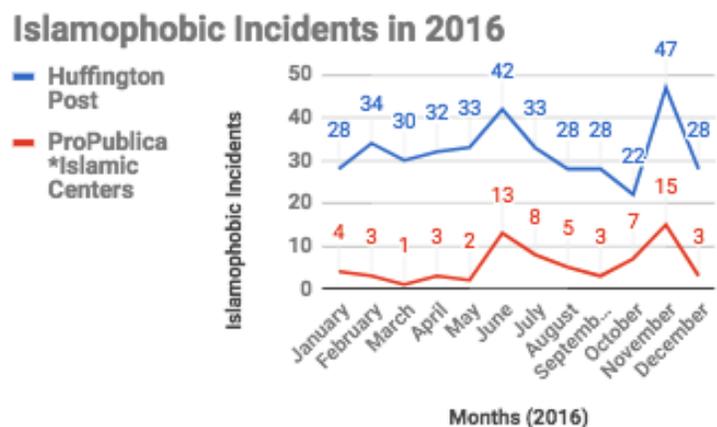


Figure 2. *Islamophobic Incidents in 2016, from Bridget Ott.*

Data from the Huffington Post and ProPublica are compared in Figure 2 above. It is important to note that the Huffington Post tracked *all* Islamophobic attacks, while ProPublica *only* tracked attacks on Islamic Centers. Despite this inconsistency, the two months with the most attacks correspond.

²⁹ "Islamophobia," The Huffington Post, accessed September 10, 2017, <http://testkitchen.huffingtonpost.com/islamophobia/>.

³⁰ Documenting Hate, August 17, 2017, accessed September 10, 2017, <http://projects.propublica.org/graphics/mosques>.

To discuss why June and November experienced heightened Islamophobia compared to other months, it is important to work backwards. On November 8, 2016 Donald Trump was declared the winner of the 2016 presidential election – a major political event. After the results were announced, a pocket of American's proceeded to act according to their prejudices in Trump's new America. Of the 47 Islamophobic attacks in November, 18 of them (38%) occurred in the week following Trump's election.³¹ Along with the overall November increase in Islamophobic attacks, it is very important to note that over one-third of them happened within one week of his win. Attacks closer to the date of Trump's actions and statements are more likely to have been influenced by them.

Trump's feelings about the Muslim-American community were broadcast throughout his campaign. Less than a year before his win, on November 21, 2015, Trump revisited false claims he supported in 2001: "He revived a completely debunked anti-Muslim myth when he claimed to remember seeing 'thousands and thousands' of Muslims in New Jersey cheering as the World Trade Center collapsed following the 9/11 attacks."³² When confronted with evidence from George Stephanopoulos on ABC, Trump stood by his original statement. Politifact checked Trump's claim and could not find any evidence to support it, releasing the statement, "This defies basic logic. If thousands and thousands of people were celebrating the 9/11 attacks on American soil many people beyond Trump would remember it."³³ Trump's revisiting of this

³¹ "Islamophobia," The Huffington Post, accessed September 10, 2017, <http://testkitchen.huffingtonpost.com/islamophobia/>.

³² Leah Nelson, "Backlash," *Intelligence Report*, February 17, 2016, accessed September 10, 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2016/backlash>.

³³ Lauren Carroll, "Fact-Checking Trump's Claim That Thousands in New Jersey Cheered When World Trade Center Tumbled," Politifact, November 22, 2015, accessed March 21, 2018, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2015/nov/22/donald-trump/fact-checking-trumps-claim-thousands-new-jersey-ch/>.

painful accusation against the New Jersey Muslim community aroused feelings of hate towards Muslims. Not all Americans fact check information they hear from politicians; those with Islamophobic tendencies may see the appeal of a president who dislikes Muslims.

Two weeks later, Trump took his rhetoric a step farther. On December 2, 2015, husband and wife, Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik, murdered 14 people in San Bernardino, California. Investigations revealed that the couple was inspired by the Islamic State.³⁴ Then-President Obama responded with an inspirational message about interfaith dialogue, and the importance of recognizing this event as a terrorist problem and not an Islamic problem. Trump disagreed. On December 7, 2015, he announced his proposal for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States,”³⁵ which would come to be known as the Muslim Ban. In response to the San Bernardino shooting, Trump added “Muslims around the world believe violence against Americans is justified and that [sic] they believe American Muslims should be allowed to live under sharia law.”³⁶ This is a bold statement. There are approximately 1.8 billion Muslims in the world. The likelihood of 1.8 billion people *completely agreeing on anything* is already small.

In terms of agreeing on sharia law, a study conducted by the Council on Foreign Relations in 2011 notes, “Many experts say that there is little evidence that there is widespread support from the US Muslim community for sharia law, or that if hardline Muslims tried to

³⁴ Leah Nelson, "Backlash," *Intelligence Report*, February 17, 2016, accessed September 10, 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2016/backlash>.

³⁵ Jessica Taylor, "Trump Calls For 'Total And Complete Shutdown Of Muslims Entering' U.S.," NPR, December 07, 2015, accessed March 20, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2015/12/07/458836388/trump-calls-for-total-and-complete-shutdown-of-muslims-entering-u-s>.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

implement it, they would be successful.”³⁷ Despite the evidence against enforcement of sharia law in the United States, Trump continued blaming religious laws for the actions of a few individuals. Additionally, Muslims in the United States represent many different races, ethnic groups, and sects of Islam. This diversity makes it difficult to speak of the Muslim-American community as a single entity. The true commonality between all Muslim-Americans is that they are both Muslim *and* American. When discussing the political opinions and motives of a domestic terrorist, it is imperative to examine that *individual's* beliefs, opinions, and motives, rather than the religion of 1.8 billion people.

The next instance of Islamic terror in the United States occurred in June 2016 – the month in 2016 with the second highest amount of Islamophobic attacks. On June 12, 2016, Omar Mateen walked into Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida and killed 49 people. This can be classified as a major hostile event of 2016. At the time, this was the deadliest mass shooting in modern US history. (It has since been surpassed by the Las Vegas shooting at the Harvest Music Festival on October 1, 2017, which resulted in 58 casualties).

Before the shooting, Mateen expressed his loyalty: “Mateen made emergency 911 calls shortly beforehand in which he reportedly stated his allegiance to Islamic State.”³⁸ Islamophobic events in the month of June may be attributed to backlash from the nightclub shooting. However Mateen’s father, Seddique Mateen, made clear that his son’s actions were not about religion. He mentioned an instance when his son reacted angrily after seeing two men kiss in public; Mateen’s disgust may have been his motive for attacking members of the LGBTQA+

³⁷ Toni Johnson, "Muslims in the United States," Council on Foreign Relations, September 19, 2011, accessed March 22, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/background/muslims-united-states#p1>.

³⁸ "Orlando Gay Nightclub Shooting: Who Was Omar Mateen?" BBC News, June 14, 2016, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36513468>.

community. Unexpectedly, reports of Omar Mateen's own use of gay dating sights and frequent appearances at the nightclub came to light after the shooting.³⁹ Rather than acting as an agent of Islamic terror, it is likely that Mateen's behavior was a reaction to his own identity conflicts.

In the week that followed Mateen's attack, data from the Huffington Post accounts for 19 Islamophobic incidents.⁴⁰ This is almost half (45%) of total 42 incidents in June. Trump's responses to the attack did not help with the situation. The day of the attack, Trump tweeted, "Appreciate the congrats for being right on radical Islamic terrorism, I don't want congrats, I want toughness & vigilance. We must be smart!"⁴¹ At the time however, the motive behind the shooting had not been released. Trump's tweet may have insinuated Islamophobic responses.

University of Minnesota professor Enid Logan reminds that, "Following the 2016 mass shooting in Orlando, Florida, he [Trump] went as far as to propose 'a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States.'"⁴² On Sean Hannity's news show on Fox on June 14, Trump blamed the problem of domestic Islamic terrorism on a lack of assimilation: "For some reason there's no real assimilation. ... there is a percentage of people who want to do what this maniac did in Orlando. ... the number of people becomes more and more as we take in thousands and thousands of more people."⁴³ Trump's solution to the assimilation problem of Muslim immigrants was to revisit the Muslim Ban he first suggested in December 2015.

³⁹ "Orlando Gay Nightclub Shooting: Who Was Omar Mateen?" BBC News, June 14, 2016, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36513468>.

⁴⁰ "Islamophobia," The Huffington Post, accessed September 10, 2017, <http://testkitchen.huffingtonpost.com/islamophobia/>.

⁴¹ Donald J. Trump. Twitter Post. June 12, 2016, 9:43 AM.

⁴² Enid Logan, "Anger Management," *RSA: 21st Century Enlightenment* 162, no. 5566 (2016): accessed March 26, 2018.

⁴³ Tara Golshan, "Trump Claims American Muslims Don't Assimilate. The Data Shows He's Wrong," Vox, June 15, 2016, accessed March 22, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/2016/6/15/11943160/donald-trump-muslim-assimilation-us>.

Interestingly, the study conducted by the Council on Foreign Relations mentioned above shows the opposite of what Trump is claiming. While 50% of Muslims surveyed identified as Muslims before Americans, this percentage is almost identical to the percentage of Christians surveyed who identified as Christians before Americans.⁴⁴ Muslim immigrants are just as likely to identify as Americans as Christian immigrants are. Following Trump's logic, non-assimilation of Christians is also creating an "assimilation problem," and therefore Christians should also be banned from entering the United States. Countering this offensive statement, the problem of domestic Islamic terrorism once again goes back to the beliefs, opinions, and motives of the individual perpetrator – not of an entire religion.

In September 2016, the Columbia Journalism Review published a study examining the effects social media has on Islamophobia. Hate speech is protected under the First Amendment, meaning "hate speech against Muslims is not simply tolerated and largely unpunished, but normalized into a valid political position."⁴⁵ Trump is just one of many Twitter users who posts Islamophobic tweets online. The NYU Social Media and Political Participation (SMaPP) Lab collected data from both Twitter and Facebook analyzing the number of anti-Muslim tweets and comments from April 2015 to July 2016. Using the data from SMaPP regarding Anti-Muslim tweets, Figure 3 shows that the largest amounts of Islamophobic attacks in 2016 came after the bombings in Brussels on March 22 and the shooting in Orlando on June 12. These data are a collection of global tweets in response to global events. Focusing on events in the United States,

⁴⁴ Toni Johnson, "Muslims in the United States," Council on Foreign Relations, September 19, 2011, accessed March 22, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/background/muslims-united-states#p1>.

⁴⁵ Rafia Zakaria, "Hate and Incriminate: The US Election, Social Media, and American Muslims," Columbia Journalism Review, September 15, 2016, accessed April 2, 2018, https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/hate_terrorism_trump_election_social_media_american_muslims.php#all-speech.

the graph shows that the online response regarding the attack in Orlando was almost one-and-a-half times larger than the online response regarding the attack in San Bernardino, California six months earlier. In all of these instances, the perpetrators were identified by the media as Muslims. Backlash against Muslim's online may be attributed to the media's identification. However, the amount of Islamophobic tweets greatly increased in 2016, during the election cycle. This rise in rhetoric can be attributed to Trump's increasing media presence as it became clear that he was the frontrunner of the Republican Party.

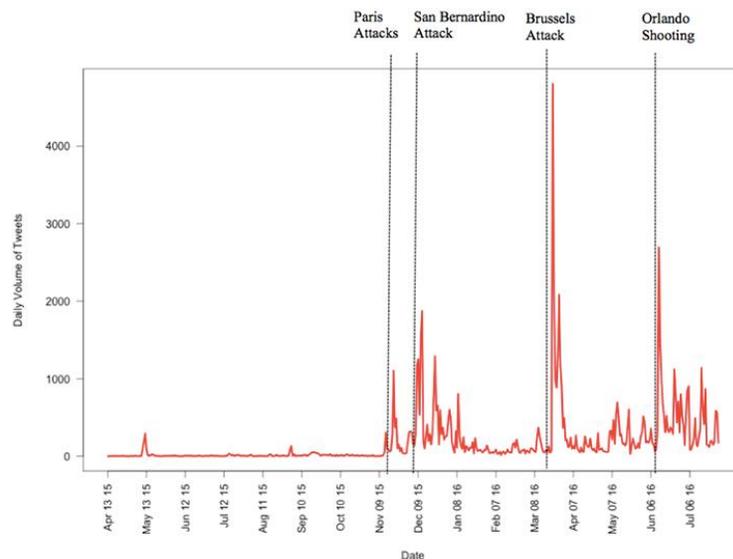


Figure 3. From NYU's SMaPP Lab, Alexandra Siegel.⁴⁶

When examining the impact partisanship has on the response to Trump's comments, it is important to note that his comments are presented differently on conservative and liberal news outlets. Republicans hold more conservative ideologies while Democrats hold more liberal ideologies. Generally, conservatives receive their news from different outlets than liberals. According to a 2014 study by Pew Research Center, 47% of respondents who maintain

⁴⁶ SMaPP: Social Media and Political Participation, New York University, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://wp.nyu.edu/smapp/>.

consistently conservative viewpoints watch Fox News. On the other hand, those with consistently liberal viewpoints are more diverse in where they receive their news: 15% use CNN, 13% use NPR, 12% use MSNBC and 10% use the New York Times.⁴⁷ The presentation of news is different on conservative channels vs liberal channels, leading to different opinions about the same news story.

Since the 2016 election, Trump's comments have created a partisan hostility that has followed him into his presidency. Data from James Zogby at the Arab American Institute shows that there has been a small decline in favorability towards Arabs and Muslims since 2010. Those with favorable views of Arabs dropped from 43% in 2010 to 35% in 2017; those with favorable views of Muslims dropped from 35% in 2010 to 34% in 2017. Overall attitudes regarding Muslims in America have not drastically changed. However, if increases in Islamophobia can be attributed to an active minority of Americans, the decline in favorable views of Arabs and Muslims may also be linked to them.

Zogby's report also gives insight to the partisan divide of public opinion. He reports that after Trump's visit to the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the West Bank) in May 2017, Republicans polled *disliked* Arabs and Muslims by a 3:1 ratio. On the other hand, Democrats polled *liked* Muslims on a 2:1 ratio.⁴⁸ Similar results can be found when polling about Arab Americans and Muslim Americans. Only about 30% of polled Republicans had positive views on

⁴⁷ Amy Mitchell et al., "Political Polarization & Media Habits," Pew Research Center's Journalism Project, October 21, 2014, accessed April 03, 2018, <http://www.journalism.org/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/>.

⁴⁸ "American Attitudes Toward Arabs, Muslims, Immigration, Civil Rights, and Surveillance," Arab American Institute, January 31, 2017, accessed October 22, 2017, http://www.aaiusa.org/american_attitudes_toward_arabs_muslims_immigration_civil_rights_and_surveillance_july_2017.

these two groups, while 60% of polled Democrats had positive views.⁴⁹ This divide has less to do with traditional party politics and more to do with the behavior Trump enables from his supporters. Zogby agrees that Trump has made an impact on the views of Arab Americans and Muslim Americans, stating, “While Donald Trump has worked to build relationships across the Arab World, the reality is that he and his party have cultivated a hostility toward Arabs and Muslims that has a very damaging effect on our communities here in the United States.”⁵⁰ It is important to note that these differences may have been present before Trump’s political career began. Either way, as Trump’s comments increase, the partisan divide resulting from his hateful motives deepens.

Overall, the amount of Islamophobia in the United States has increased since the beginning of January 2016. Multiple sources mark the highest amount of Islamophobic incidents in November (after the presidential election) and in June (after the Pulse nightclub shooting). Despite the amount of positive outreach Muslims have done in a post-9/11 America, the overall favorable view of Arabs and Muslims has decreased. Republicans are more likely to dislike Arabs and Muslims than Democrats, but both sides still include a significant portion with negative views.

Strengths and Weaknesses

As with any experiment, this project has both strengths and weaknesses. One strength is the condensed time frame for the continuous and systemic monitoring of hate crimes. This

⁴⁹ "American Attitudes Toward Arabs, Muslims, Immigration, Civil Rights, and Surveillance," Arab American Institute, January 31, 2017, accessed October 22, 2017, http://www.aaiusa.org/american_attitudes_toward_arabs_muslims_immigration_civil_rights_and_surveillance_july_2017.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

project relies on data from 2016 and uses news stories, public opinion, and scholarly articles from – for the most part – 2015, 2016, and 2017. With the help of the Internet, it is easy to fact check this recent data, as well as prove its reliability from multiple sources. Another strength it provides is the insight to certain prejudices and biases in America. While not all who hold Islamophobic beliefs act on them, the increasing number of Islamophobic incidents shows the changing views of the American public.

The largest weakness of this project is that it is based on self-reported data. Any Islamophobic attacks that were not reported at all – or not reported to the Huffington Post and/or ProPublica – were not included in the data set. Furthermore, this project mainly focuses on Islamophobia in 2016. It does not include other forms of prejudice against other ethnic or religious groups.

Hate crime reports to the police were not included in this project because of a lack of availability. After looking at police reports from major cities in the US including New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and Detroit, the city with the best records of hate crimes reported to the police was Phoenix, Arizona. The report from Phoenix was grouped into quarters, making the data less time specific. However, as shown in Table 1 below, the quarter with the most Anti-Islamic hate crimes was between October and December 2016. This may correspond with the increase in hate crimes in November after Trump's election, as seen in Figure 2. It is impossible to know for certain because of the way the data is grouped together.

After running a chi square test on this data however, it is found not to be statistically significant. The calculated probability is 0.062, which is greater than the 0.05 value of statistical significance. In the case of Anti-Islam hate crimes in Phoenix, Arizona, the null hypothesis is dropped and the Anti-Islam hate crimes do not depend on Trump's rhetoric.

Phoenix Police Department 2016 Bias Crime Statistics

Quarter	Months (2016)	Anti-Islamic Hate Crimes	Other Hate Crimes	Total Hate Crimes	Percentage of Anti-Islamic Hate Crimes
1	January - March	2	33	35	5.71%
2	April - June	1	37	38	2.63%
3	July - September	1	43	44	2.27%
4	October - December	8	48	56	14.29%
Total		12	161	173	6.94%

Table 1. Phoenix Police Department 2016 Bias Crime Statistics,⁵¹ from Bridget Ott.

Similarly, hate crimes reported to the FBI share a lack of availability. There is a lag period of over a year between when a year ends and when the FBI publishes that year's hate crime data online. When this project began in August 2017, the hate crime statistics for 2016 had not yet been released. Using data from 2015, there seemed to be a significant amount of Anti-Arab and Anti-Islam hate crimes. Nevertheless, reports from the FBI encompass the entire year, rather than individual months. This makes it difficult to determine what event(s) may have caused the increase in hate crimes.

Despite this setback, data from the FBI is helpful in showing the overall increase of hate crimes from 2015 to 2016. When examining bias motivations in 2015, of the 6,885 total hate crimes, 4,029 of them were motivated by "race/ethnicity/ancestry." Of these 4,029, 47 were classified as "Anti-Arab" crimes. This equates to 1.17% of the "race/ethnicity/ancestry" crimes and 0.68% of the total offenses. 1,354 of the total hate crimes were motivated by religion. Of these 1,354, 301 were classified as "Anti-Islam." This equates to 22.23% of crimes motivated by religion and 4.37% of the total offenses.⁵² The information for 2016 has recently been published.

⁵¹ Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Bias Crimes, July 26, 2017, raw data, Phoenix Police Department, Phoenix.

⁵² Offense Type by Bias Motivation, 2015, 2017, raw data, Washington, D.C.

Bias motivation in 2016 reported 7,321 total hate crimes. 4,229 of these hate crimes were motivated by “race/ethnicity/ancestry.” Of these 4,229, 56 were classified as “Anti-Arab” crimes. This equates to 1.32% of the “race/ethnicity/ancestry” crimes and 0.76% of the total offenses. There were 1,538 hate crimes in 2016 motivated by the victim’s religion, with 381 crimes being classified as “Anti-Islam”. This equates to 24.77% of crimes motivated by religion and 5.20% of the total offenses.⁵³ A table that better conveys this information can be found below.

	Total Hate Crimes	Motivated by Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry	“Anti-Arab” Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry Bias	Motivated by Religion (of Victim)	“Anti-Islam” Religion Bias
2015	6,885	4,029	47 (47/4029) = 1.17%	1,354	301 (301/1354) = 22.23%
2016	7,321	4,229	56 (56/7321) = 1.32%	1,538	381 (381/1538) = 24.77%

Table 2. Selected FBI Bias Motivated Hate Crimes 2015 and 2016, from Bridget Ott.

A chi square test found this data to be statistically significant. Looking at only the “Anti-Arab” hate crimes, the p-value of 0.108 is greater than the alpha value of 0.05. Looking at only the “Anti-Islam” hate crimes, the p-value of 0.519 is greater than the alpha value of 0.05. Individually, both categories can be considered statistically insignificant. However, when you combine the number of “Anti-Arab” and “Anti-Islam” crimes and compare them with the total number of hate crimes in 2015 and 2016 respectively, the p-value is 0.017. This value is less than the alpha value of 0.05, making the data statistically significant. Statistically significant data accepts the null hypothesis – increased hate crimes against the Islamic community are dependent on comments from Trump.

⁵³ Offense Type by Bias Motivation, 2016, 2018, raw data, Washington, D.C.

Overall, the amount of hate crimes against Muslims and Arabs (who may be perceived as Muslims) increased in 2016. However, without dividing the data into months, there is no way to know what events this increase specifically corresponds with.

Another weakness is the issue of measuring cause and effect. There was Islamophobia before Trump ran for public office and there were Islamophobic attacks that were not provoked by Trump. The increase in correlation with Trump does not indicate causation. However, there is some link between Trump's political rise and the increase in Islamophobia. Trump supporters read and heard Trump's openly Islamophobic comments and may have developed the nerve to act on their own Islamophobic convictions.

A future solution to this issue of cause vs effect would be delaying the data of the independent variable (in this project, Trump's statement) after observing the dependent variable (in this project, Islamophobic attacks). If there was a lag of one week, Trump's comments in the first week of June should cause an increase in Islamophobia in the second week of June. Similarly, if there was a lag of one month, Trump's comments in June should cause an increase in Islamophobia in July. When data is recorded and reported as individual events, as in the data provided by the Huffington Post, this lag can be more easily utilized. However, when data is grouped into quarters, months, or years, as is most hate crime data, the lag is more difficult to determine. If possible, the argument of this project would be stronger with more specific, lagged, data.

These weaknesses affect my theory because they do not show the complete breadth of Islamophobia in America. Since hate crimes must be reported to be accounted for, it is possible that the true breadth will never be measured.

Next Steps

If I had the ability to continue this project, there are a few follow up measures I would take. To begin, I would continue tracking Trump's statements through reactions from the public and domestic Islamophobia. Like the SMaPP lab, I would utilize data from Twitter.

I would compare Islamophobia in the United States with anti-Semitism and see if these two types of religious prejudice have any sort of correlation. Based on Figure 4, presented by the Anti-Defamation League, anti-Semitism increased after the November 2016 election. In tandem with information from the ADL, I would also examine more public opinion polls to determine the relationship between Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism.

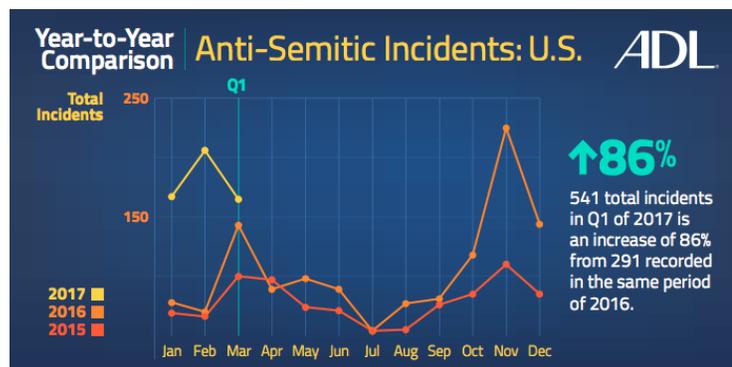


Figure 4. From ADL Audit, *Anti-Semitic Incidents: US*.⁵⁴

In the order of Abrahamic religions, Judaism came first. Christianity built off Judaism, and Islam built off Judaism and Christianity. Therefore, it is plausible that Christians know more about Jewish liturgy and tradition (a precursor to their own) than Islamic liturgy and tradition. Perceiving the differences of the “other” is easier to do with the more familiar Jewish tradition, making Jews a more identifiable out-group.

⁵⁴ "U.S. Anti-Semitic Incidents Surged 2016-17," ADL, 2017, accessed December 3, 2017, [https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/Anti-Semitic Audit Print_vf2.pdf](https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/Anti-Semitic%20Audit%20Print_vf2.pdf).

Both Muslims and Jews are outside of America's Christian "norm," which puts them in different, but possibly equal, out-groups. While Trump's anti-Muslim comments are more blatant than his between-the-lines statements regarding Jews, his overall messages of hate may contribute toward the increase in anti-Semitic sentiments. For example, after a neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, Trump responded that there was violence on many sides. This response does not come across as blatant anti-Semitism. However, when one section of the crowd carried Nazi flags and the other section of the crowd peacefully protested, claiming there was blame on more than one side is anti-Semitic.

When the FBI data mentioned above is used to measure hate crimes motivated by the victim's religion, 695 of the 1,354 crimes in 2015 were "Anti-Jewish,"⁵⁵ and 834 of the 1,538 crimes in 2016 were "Anti-Jewish."⁵⁶ Both statistics are significantly larger than their "Anti-Islam" contemporaries. It would be noteworthy to compare the public opinion about these two out-groups – Jews and Muslims – and determine which group is more "out." Based on these opinions, it would be interesting to determine which group was more affected by Trump's comments.

Another possible follow up measure would be to assess the impact of domestic Islamophobia on United States foreign policy in the Middle East. Since the end of World War II, the United States has been actively involved in the Middle East. Through regime changes, business dealings, multiple wars, terrorism, and the refugee crisis, the US has maintained an active presence in the region. It would be interesting to assess what effect the current rise in American Islamophobia has on this relationship.

⁵⁵ Offense Type by Bias Motivation, 2015, 2017, raw data, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁶ Offense Type by Bias Motivation, 2016, 2018, raw data, Washington, D.C.

Islamophobia has the potential to influence US foreign policy. When American Muslims are portrayed as the out-group, it becomes easier to frame foreign Muslims in a negative way. This can be explained through psychology. According to the American Psychological Association, priming can be defined as “the effect in which recent experience of a stimulus facilitates or inhibits later processing of the same or a similar stimulus.”⁵⁷ In other words, when a person is subconsciously exposed to an idea, they are more likely to choose a similar idea in consciousness. Negative priming of Muslims can subconsciously cause foreign policy decision makers to make choices with the view that all (non-American) Muslims are bad. A person who continuously sees Muslims portrayed negatively on the news, may be primed to associate Muslims with negative stereotypes. Priming combined with implicit bias (explained in the “Hypothesis” section above) leads to over-exposure of the idea of Muslims as the “other” or the out-group. This can result in negative foreign policy decisions that affect the entire Muslim world, rather than the specific sub-group related to the goals of foreign policy.

How the US reacts with its foreign policy in the Middle East is largely shaped by the views of elite decision makers. As described above, psychological variables such as priming and implicit bias can result in policy that is (sub)consciously prejudice. This can be seen in one of the areas of foreign policy that overlaps with domestic policy – refugee resettlement. When Trump signed Executive Order 13769 (the Muslim Ban) just seven days after his inauguration, he banned immigration from seven Muslim majority countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. According to BBC, “Rights groups say Mr. Trump’s order targeted Muslims

⁵⁷ *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, s.v. "Priming," accessed April 19, 2018, <https://dictionary.apa.org/priming>.

because of their faith and that no refugees had been convicted of terrorism-related crimes.”⁵⁸

Most refugees fleeing violence in these countries are Muslims being persecuted by Islamic terrorist groups. In fact, the demographic that suffers the largest number of casualties because of Islamic terrorism is Muslims. According to William Braniff, the Executive Director of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “In the Middle East, Muslims are the most likely victims of both terrorism and counterterrorism efforts.”⁵⁹ Islamophobia can lead to prejudiced policy (like the Muslim Ban) and affect Muslim refugees fleeing from violence. Islamophobia can also lead to violent counterterrorism efforts, killing many innocent civilians in the fight against terrorism.

Conclusion

Donald Trump has divided America into in-groups and out-groups. He has framed the (non-Muslim) in-group as *real* Americans while framing Muslims as the out-group, the “others.” Through interviews, tweets, and speeches, Trump has made his views about Muslims publicly known. He has brought back post-9/11 Islamophobic myths, insinuated that 1.8 billion people believe in a violent form of an otherwise peaceful religion, and proposed hurtful legislation – like a ban on Muslim immigration into the United States.

Donald Trump’s comments about Islam and Muslims in response to a hostile event and to a political event have implications with Islamophobia in the United States. After the Orlando

⁵⁸ "Trump's Executive Order: Who Does Travel Ban Affect?" BBC News, February 10, 2017, accessed April 19, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-38781302>.

⁵⁹ Michael Edison Hayden, "Muslims 'absolutely' the Group Most Victimized by Global Terrorism, Researchers Say," ABC News, June 20, 2017, accessed April 19, 2018, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/muslims-absolutely-group-victimized-global-terrorism-researchers/story?id=48131273>.

nightclub shooting (a hostile event) in June 2016, Donald Trump's public statements sparked rage in those that agreed with him, causing an increase in domestic Islamophobia. Additionally, after Trump won the election (a political event) in November 2016, Islamophobes who supported the Islamophobic candidate felt validated and acted on their feelings. Partisan divides exist on this issue, with Republicans being more likely than Democrats to express anti-Muslim feelings.

The Executive Office of the United States of America is sometimes referred to as the most powerful position in the world. The President serves as an example for millions of people. Unfortunately, Trump is using his position to promote hate, and many of his supporters are following him in tandem. Hatred towards Muslims has expanded the xenophobia problem in the United States. Until every American learns to accept the stranger, the United States will never be United.

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