

# The Politics of Muslims in America

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes political participation and the attitudes of Muslim-Americans. Assessing national patterns, the first part highlights several regression models, discerning the impact of race/ethnicity, gender, foreign born status, age, and education on political activity and attitudes. I also compare changes in voting patterns among respondents between the 2000 and 2004 elections. The second half is based on in-depth interviews of Muslims from St. Louis, Missouri, probing more directly particular shifts in views and participation since September 11. Among the national sample, South Asians and Middle Easterners largely supported Republican George W. Bush in 2000, while African-Americans voted for Democrat Al Gore. However, by 2004, race and ethnicity were no longer statistically significant factors dividing the Muslim vote; instead, support largely went to Democrat John Kerry. Changes in voting patterns between 2000 and 2004 were also evident in the St. Louis sample of South Asians and Middle Easterners. They generally cited unfavorable views of Muslim treatment both at home and abroad since the War on Terror began as major reasons for these changes. Partisan and voting shifts were not evident among African-Americans, who have been consistent Democrats. However, many African-Americans in addition to Middle Easterners and South Asians reported heightened interest in politics and similar changes since September 11. Only Bosnians, who are relatively new to the United States, report few changes. This is largely because they have yet to develop firm political identities. Among both samples, Muslim-Americans generally exhibit high rates of participation in various political activities, many reporting increasing interest and involvement since September 11. Therefore, regardless of the hardships they may currently feel, Muslim-Americans are not hiding in the shadows but are fully participating in the political sphere.

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## INTRODUCTION

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States (Fradkin 2004) and predicted to become the country's second largest by mid-century (Afridi 2001).<sup>1</sup> Despite Muslims' increasing presence, there is a dearth of scholarship analyzing Muslim-Americans, particularly in the area of political behavior. Utilizing national data and a case study of residents of St. Louis, Missouri, this article fills this research gap by exploring Muslim-Americans' view on politics and patterns of political participation.

Specific questions probed include: How active are Muslims in a variety of political activities? How important is it to them to participate in politics? How often do they keep up with governmental or public affairs? Have levels of political interest and participation declined since September 11 or has this watershed event actually heightened their concern for and engagement with politics? Have patterns of Muslim partisanship changed since September 11? What major differences exist among the main Muslim subgroups — African-Americans, South Asians, and Middle Easterners, in political attitudes and participation? Are there divergences of attitudes and behavior among American born Muslims as opposed to immigrants? Do Muslim women and men hold differing feelings toward politics, exhibit gaps in participation, and support diverse parties? How does Muslim educational status interact with other factors?

National data are particularly useful in painting a more representative picture of Muslim political attitudes and participation. Employing several regression models, I measure the impact of race/ethnicity, gender, foreign born status, age, and education on attitudes toward participation and political behavior. While analyzing political changes within the national sample is possible but limited by the data, I probe potential changes in my case study of St. Louis Muslims, having conducted in-person interviews with predominately South Asian, Middle Eastern, Bosnian, and African-American respondents.

As Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States, examination of Muslims' presence in a number of spheres, including the political, is crucial. The post-September 11 climate raises many questions about Muslim prospects for political inclusion. Given the current scrutiny Muslims face both domestically and abroad, they may have negative views on the political sphere and be hesitant to participate. On the other hand, this new reality may push them in the opposite direction,

increasing the importance they assign to politics and ultimate engagement. However, views and behaviors are likely to diverge among specific Muslim subgroups. These potential patterns are detailed subsequently. First, the thin scholarship on Muslim-Americans is evaluated.

## WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT MUSLIM-AMERICANS

Literature on Muslim-Americans centers on religious values and practices within certain communities (Haddad and Lummis 1987; Smith 1999), demographics (Haniff 2003; Ba-Yunus and Kone 2004), immigration patterns (McCloud 2003), identity and assimilation struggles within the larger American Judeo/Christian culture (Wormser 1994; Haddad 1998; Khan 1998, 2003; McCloud 2004), and the development of Muslim-American organizations (Ahmed 1991; Suleiman 1999).

Findings dealing with demographics and immigration patterns illustrate Muslim diversity in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status as well as religious practices and beliefs (Smith 1999). A large portion of the population was born outside the United States. Of these, South Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants are the most prominent. While their presence in the United States dates farther back, a major wave of Middle Eastern immigration occurred post-1965 in response to events like the Iranian revolution (Leonard 2003, 10). Large numbers of South Asians also arrived in 1965, taking advantage of favorable changes in immigration policies. South Asians are now the largest group of foreign-born Muslims living in the United States (Leonard 2003, 13). They are generally highly educated, have elevated median incomes, and are well represented in the medical profession. By contrast, Middle Easterners are more varied in class and educational backgrounds (Leonard 2003, 13).

Both Middle Eastern and South Asian Muslims generally come from religiously traditionalist cultures. While many South Asians brought conservative outlooks to America, several Middle Eastern subgroups such as Iranians and Lebanese are quite secular (Leonard 2003; Sabagh and Bzorgmehr 1994). In fact, for most of their history in the United States, Middle Easterners possessed stronger identifications with ethnicity than religion. However, this has changed since the 1990s; they have undergone a significant shift to identify primarily as Muslims and developing greater religiosity (Cainkar 2002). Much of this is due to perceptions of various policy failures toward the Middle East and a general

sense of powerlessness shared with other Muslims around the world (Cainkar 2002, 26). The anti-Islamic domestic and international climate has strengthened this Islamic consciousness, leading to more critical views of treatment.

Both groups have varying experiences with democracy in their home regions. While South Asians have experience with democratic processes, albeit limited in some countries, many Middle Easterners hail from religious theocracies. According to Karen Leonard:

These post-1965 Indian and Pakistani Muslim immigrants are conspicuous and powerful in American religious and political arenas. Most of them have been educated in the English language since childhood, and Muslim Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Afghans often have strong religious orientations. Indian Muslims are accustomed to being a minority in a secular democracy and to varying degrees; all South Asians come to the United States with experience in democratic politics, particularly student politics. In contrast, Muslims from most Middle Eastern countries have had little experience with democratic processes. (14)

Although much of the Muslim population is foreign born, African-Americans currently comprise the largest portion of Muslim-Americans, representing 30% to 40% of the population. These numbers should continue to rise, since they are the greatest proportion of new converts (Leonard 2003, 5). Race and class struggles have heavily shaped African-American identity; Islam was an alternative to the Christian and white dominated structure. In contrast to their immigrant counterparts, most African-Americans are converts to Islam, many initially entering as followers of the Nation of Islam. After the death of Elijah Mohammed in 1975, the Nation of Islam established more traditional Islamic structures and practices (Curtis 2002; McCloud 1995). These changes occurred under the leadership of Warith Deen Mohammed (Imam Mohammed), Elijah Mohammed's son. This transition proved controversial, leading to its separation in 1977 into the Nation of Islam led by Louis Farrakhan and the World Community of al-Islam in the West headed by Imam Mohammed (Ansari 2004; Curtis 2002; McCloud 1995; Nuruddin 1998; Smith 1999). This new grouping redefined important beliefs in accordance with traditional Islam, but "continued to claim the right to interpret Islam in view of the circumstances in which African-Americans lived, focusing on specifically black issues" (Curtis 2002a, 108).<sup>2</sup> Followers of Imam Mohammed are the larger

portion of the population, but are often marginalized from the immigrant populations, particularly those of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent (Ansari 2004, 260). According to Karen Leonard, African-Americans have actively pursued some of this disconnection.

The African American Muslim communities remain quite distinctive. . . They often hold ambivalent or antagonistic views toward the U.S. government, Christianity, and other racial or ethnic groups, including Muslim immigrants. Because Islam is seen as a defense against racism, as a new and separate collective identity in the United States, many African American Muslims argue that *asabiyya* (group solidarity and experience) must be given priority over *umma* (the universal Muslim community) at this stage in African American Muslim life. They do not readily accept the customs or authority of immigrant Muslims (Leonard 2003, 9).

There are also differences in socioeconomic status separating African-Americans from Middle Easterners and South Asians. Generally, African-Americans have lower levels of education and income. Given that Muslim-Americans have clear differences in immigrant status, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic backgrounds, divergent patterns among subgroups are important to understand. Because specific racial and ethnic groups generally dominate mosques, analyzing these three major subgroups is particularly appropriate and is a major emphasis of this article.

In 1999, Project Muslims in the American Public Square (MAPS) formed to increase the knowledge base about Muslim-Americans. Research topics include the assimilation experience (Khalidi 2004) and the role of African-Americans in Islam (Jackson 2004; Ansari 2004). Although important, these subjects are very similar to those already established. However, central to this line of research is now the role of Islamic organizations on political participation, focusing on Muslim contributions to American civic life. Research questions explored in this and related articles include whether mosques play an important role in rallying congregations into political action, similar to findings from churches (Verba et al. 1995; Wuthnow 1999). The participation involved in religious organizations increases various skills, including those useful in civic associations. There appears to be such a relationship between mosque attendance and increased civic participation (Bagby 2004; Jamal 2005). Regardless of ethnicity, mosque participation is accompanied by greater civic involvement such as working with

organizations helping the poor and participation with neighborhood or community groups (Jamal 2005, 531).

Beyond the mosque, Muslim organizations are increasingly visible, particularly since the September 11 attacks. Some of these organizations are mobilizing members into political action; the Muslim-American Society (MAS) registers voters at annual meetings (Nimer 2004). Organization leaders also encourage greater political participation (Afridi 2001). Muslims are forming political organizations, and increasingly contributing financially to candidates individually and as part of political action committees, such as MPAC (Afridi 2001; Nimer 2004). Moreover, September 11 has led Muslims to reevaluate many political issues (Leonard 2001). By contrast, very little work dealing specifically with individual political behavior has been conducted. Findings from this literature will be used in constructing various hypotheses, detailed subsequently.

Headway has also been made in the systematic examination of Muslim-American attitudes and political behavior. Various commercial polling firms have led the way in this endeavor. Project MAPS through Zogby International conducted the first major scientific poll dealing with attitudes of Muslim-Americans in 2001, reporting data on demographics, religious practices, political opinions, and participation. A second survey was carried out just prior to the 2004 presidential election. In 2007, the Pew Research Center surveyed Muslims worldwide, including Americans. Taken together, these are important breakthroughs. Because of its wider array of political questions to draw from relative to Pew, the 2004 Zogby data is utilized in this study to examine national patterns of Muslim attitudes and behavior. However, by incorporating a qualitative case study, this work more directly assesses shifts in political behavior and explores reasons for these movements. It goes beyond asking *what* changes occurred, focusing on *why*, highlighting rather than obscuring differences among Muslims.

Because of the negative attention and policies directed toward Muslims since September 11 and the ongoing military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan, Muslim-Americans may feel somewhat pessimistic about the current political situation. While this may cause some to retreat from politics, the context may inspire others to care more about politics and heighten their political engagement. However, given their diverse populations, differences among Muslim-Americans are likely.

As noted earlier, Middle Easterners and South Asians have different levels of exposure to democratic politics in their home countries. There

are two possible implications of this for participation. With greater exposure to democratic practices, South Asian immigrants may be more habituated to political processes and participatory than Middle Easterners. However, this might instead cause political participation to be taken for granted and lead to greater apathy for South Asians. Similarly, having less democratic exposure in their homelands, Middle Eastern immigrants may be hesitant to partake in politics in their adopted countries as research on various immigrants from similar contexts finds (Bueker 2005; Ramakrishnan 2005). But how do homeland experiences impact those operating in a new country, particularly in the political realm?

According to the theory of transferability, immigrants are highly affected by past experiences in their homelands as they operate within new environments (Black, Niemi, and, Powell 1987). The specific contexts to which immigrants move are not as important as their predispositions toward politics in their native lands. This suggests greater potential ease in adaptation: “greater exposure to any political environment (new or old) makes it easier to engage in politics; individuals find ways to effectively draw on the political skills developed in different environments” (White et al. 2008).

Other research centered on the exposure theory of political socialization downplays the impact of origin while arguing that it is greater exposure to the host country that is particularly important for determining political effects on immigrant groups. One’s superior ability to adapt coincides with residing in the new country longer. For example, some scholarship finds that turnout increases with the numbers of years spent in the United States (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). Years in the country also appears to affect partisanship. The longer immigrants from Latin America are in the United States, the more apt they are to be strong Democrats, while those from Southeast Asia, China, and Korea are more likely to be Republicans (Cain, Kiewet, and Uhlaner 1991).

Resistance theory, in contrast to the above, argues that adaptation is very difficult for immigrants because most political orientations are formed at earlier ages and are resistant to change (Merelman 1986). Resistance is particularly likely the longer one lives in one’s own home country (White et al. 2008).

In a study of diverse immigrant groups in Canada, White et al. (2008) argue that these differing theories apply to specific types of political attitudes and behavior. Evidence indicates that political transference is key to understanding political interest. If one paid attention to politics in one’s

own home country, one would be likely to do so also in one's new country and *vice versa* (276). However, both voting and partisanship offer support for the exposure hypothesis. These relatively more demanding processes require more knowledge of and habituation to the particular context (White et al. 2008, 277). Only the resistance hypothesis does not appear to be at work among these three. In fact, years of living in one's country of origin is inconsequential (White et al. 2008, 277). The above highlights the importance of transferring political interest while greater exposure to the United States is helpful to developing partisanship and participating in politics. But how will ethnicity and race interact with this?

Evidence of exposure is clear among all subgroups in that the American-born Muslim population is more apt to participate in the civic realm than those born abroad (Bagby 2004). However, mosque participation is only linked to greater political involvement for Arab-Americans, and not for South Asians and African-Americans (Jamal 2005, 529). American foreign policy toward the Middle East has been an enduring issue and even more salient since September 11. Due to their closer associations with negative stereotypes and terrorist depictions, Middle Easterners may have a more negative view of their current status in America and see this less favorably than South Asians (Schmidt 2004, 4). Together, these factors may actually lead them to be more politically aware and actively change policy (Jamal 2005). Because they are not immigrants in the same sense that Middle Easterners and South Asians are, African-Americans will not have the added pull between old and new worlds. However, because they were drawn to Islam as a source of empowerment in response to racism and simultaneously experience marginalization from Muslim immigrant groups, these experiences could foster African-American group consciousness while hampering development of political interest and mobilization, a very different pattern from what is found in black churches (Jamal 2005, 536). In his pivotal study of Detroit Muslims, Bagby (2004) finds that Arabs were the most politically active among subgroups, while African-Americans were the least supportive of participation.

Although analyzing subgroups is still crucial, there are compelling reasons to expect a general increase in political participation of American-Muslims in this post September 11 environment. According to affective intelligence theory (Marcus et al. 2000), anxiety and alienation result in greater political awareness and political participation. Ayers and Hofstetter (2008) find that Muslims' post-September 11



fears have increased their political participation (20). Ayers (2007) also argues that fear and anxiety contributed to Muslims' changing voting preferences from Bush to Kerry between 2000 and 2004, although this is largely speculative. Potential changes in Muslim partisanship are now discussed.

The development of partisanship is important and potential shifts particularly interesting in the post September 11 context. Partisanship is generally defined as someone's affective attachment to a particular political party (Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Palmquist, and Shickler 2002). Partisanship is important because it is the single biggest predictor of the vote, it influences views on policy, and those with partisan identities are more interested and participatory (Erikson and Tedin 2007). A major debate is whether partisanship remains relatively unchanged over one's life (Campbell et al. 1960), or if it shifts in response to candidate and other short-term evaluations and events, vote choices in presidential elections, and issue positions (Fiorina 1981). Although it is one of the most enduring attitudes, there is in fact much literature finding fluctuations in partisanship (Fiorina 1981; Green and Palmquist 1990; Jennings and Markus 1984). The potential for understanding partisanship is particularly ripe among Muslim-Americans since there are several factors that may pressure them to alter their attachment to parties.

Muslim political mobilization generally dates back to the 1996 election. Debates centered on whether or not participation in the American democratic process was in accordance with Islamic principles (Duran 1997), ultimately fostering political discourse among Muslim-Americans. Less successful were attempts at coalescing around either Bob Dole or Bill Clinton (Duran 1997). However, fallout from this lack of unity in 1996 set the stage for the first Muslim bloc vote in 2000. Having largely set aside the appropriateness of participation, questions instead surrounded who would best represent Muslim political interests. A coalition of Muslim organizations formed the American Muslim Political Coordination Committee (AMPCC), endorsing George W. Bush. According to the organization head "Governor Bush took the initiative to meet with local and national representatives of the Muslim community. He also promised to address Muslim concerns on domestic and foreign policy issues."<sup>3</sup> Other factors reportedly pivotal to Bush's support were Gore's strong support for Israel and his selection of a strong ally of Israel, Joseph Lieberman, as his running mate (Rose 2001). However, the endorsement of Bush met much resistance by African-Americans, who as committed Democrats felt further alienated from immigrant

Muslim groups (Khan 2003). Whether or not this bloc mobilization was responsible, according to a Zogby poll, Bush support among Muslims in 2000 was 42% and Gore 31%. Candidate recruitment and voting drives were somewhat successful while fundraising efforts were largely deemed a failure (Khan 2003).

Much changed by the 2004 election. Many viewed the Muslim bloc vote for Bush as a mistake, given the restrictive policies facing Muslims both domestically and abroad including the War on Terror and military conflicts against Muslims around the world. This caused many to reevaluate their place in the political sphere and which party, if any, could best further Muslim interests. A collection of 10 American-Muslim organizations, the American-Muslim Taskforce on Civil Rights and Elections (AMT), now endorsed John Kerry (Poole and Ali 2005). This was coupled with successful mobilization efforts, resulting in a 20% increase in Muslim-American registered voters (Poole and Ali 2005). A major shift in both partisanship and vote choice was indeed apparent. The Zogby 2004 survey found a clear backing of Kerry (76%) over Bush (7%) at the polls.<sup>4</sup> Some 50% considered themselves Democrats, 12% Republican, and 31% Independent or other.<sup>5</sup> In fact, Democratic partisans increased by 25% while Republican support greatly dwindled compared to 2001 findings.<sup>6</sup> However, how shifts differed among various subgroups as well as relevant causes need to be better understood. This is a major goal of this article.

I expect Muslims have largely switched partisanship to the Democratic Party since September 11. Others who have changed have gone from being Republicans to having no partisan affiliations. In both cases, these modifications are mainly due to feelings that Muslims have been negatively targeted through policies associated with the War on Terror and the Iraq War. Because Muslims are not a monolith, differences are salient. For example, while South Asians and Middle Easterners generally supported the Republican Party in 2000 (Rose 2001), they may be the biggest partisan shifters. Because systematic analyses of Muslim-Americans have only recently been undertaken in survey research, it is not possible to position these recent changes in a long-term perspective.<sup>7</sup> However their relatively high socioeconomic statuses and conservative religious affiliations likely pulled them toward the Republican Party; this is particularly true of South Asians.<sup>8</sup>

As African-Americans were strong supporters of the Democratic Party prior to this (Carmines and Stimson 1989) partisanship, changes will not

be evidenced. Although the national sample of Bosnian-Muslims is too low to systematically analyze, I incorporate Bosnians in my case study. Since Bosnian-Muslims of voting age are nearly all foreign born and recent immigrants, they will not yet have developed strong party connections and thus not changed partisanship. However, Bosnians in the United States for longer periods may become Democrats. The resettlement program that brought large numbers of Bosnians to St. Louis functioned under Clinton's administration.<sup>9</sup> Since Bosnians are privileged by race, they may not experience overt religious discrimination. Because of their experiences with religious persecution in the former Yugoslavia, religious discrimination in the United States may not have much of a political impact.

Beyond race and ethnicity, the exposure hypothesis underscores the importance of familiarity within the context of the country among immigrants for participation and partisanship. The American born and immigrants living in the United States longer will be more likely to participate in American politics than others because of greater acclimation. Women's political participation and interest are likely to be lower than men's, due primarily to conservative notions of women's proper role within Muslim communities and their household responsibilities, although this will vary with race, ethnicity, and generation.

## NATIONAL FINDINGS

I analyze data compiled in a Zogby International telephone survey from a random sample of 1,846 Muslims living in the United States.<sup>10</sup> Before proceeding, a word about the sample selection is in order. Sampling lists were generated from lists of common Muslim surnames.<sup>11</sup> As mentioned previously, although imperfect, since it bypasses those who lack traditional Muslim surnames, Zogby compensates for this by also including an over-sample of African-American-Muslims interviewed at mosques. African-Americans are particularly hard to sample because many are converts and generally unidentifiable as Muslims by name.<sup>12</sup> The overall margin of error is  $\pm 2.3\%$  and higher for subgroups. A weight variable provides a slight correction to make ethnic groups more proportional to their representation in the larger population.

I first examine Muslim-American participation in various political activities, followed by their political interest and attentiveness to governmental affairs, partisanship, and vote choice in the 2000 and 2004

presidential elections. These all comprise separate regression models. Since nearly all are coded as dichotomous dependent variables, logistical regression is utilized. The exceptions are discussing politics, importance of politics, and following politics. Linear regression is employed in these three cases. My main independent variables are gender, ethnicity/race, age, United States born status, and education. I do not include income because a large number of respondents refuse to disclose this information and because it highly correlates with education. I also am unable to incorporate a variable for years in the United States because including this would drop American-born respondents from the sample (Tables 1 and 2).

When asked if they are active members of their party, the only statistically significant variables are African-American and foreign born status. As expected, those born in the United States are more likely to participate in party activities while African-Americans are less so. However, African-Americans are more apt to attend a rally in support of a politician or a cause, along with the United States born, and those who are more highly educated. However, being South Asian is significantly related to *not* attending political rallies. They are also less inclined to call or write the media or politician about an issue or sign a petition while the American-born and more educated do engage in these activities at a higher rate. The American-born and highly educated are also more prone to contribute financially or work on behalf of a candidate, which is also the case for older respondents. However, African-Americans are less apt to do so than other subgroups. While gender has thus far been unrelated to any forms of participation, it is significantly related to navigating political websites. Women are less prone to engage in this activity, which is also the case for South Asians and African-Americans. However, the American-born, educated, and younger respondents are significantly more inclined to do so than any subgroups. Political discussion is only significant for three groups; Middle Easterners, United States born, and educated, who discuss politics on a more frequent basis.

Beyond specific forms of activity, it is also important to understand the significance of politics to one's life and the extent to which they follow governmental and public affairs. Interestingly, younger respondents place more emphasis on politics than their older counterparts. However, they follow politics significantly less as do women and South Asians. The American-born and educated are more prone to tap into news of governmental and public affairs (Table 3).

To understand the role of party affiliation, I develop two models. The first analyzes only respondents affiliating with either the Republican or

**Table 1.** Muslims and participation

Independent Variables	Party		Rally		Media/Petition		Candidate	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Gender	0.109	0.120	-0.094	0.106	-0.120	0.110	-0.170	0.110
South Asian	-0.170	0.226	-0.389**	0.202	-0.576***	0.218	-0.081	0.210
African-American	-0.438**	0.196	0.491***	0.185	0.163	0.206	-0.373**	0.188
Middle Eastern	0.066	0.238	0.212	0.217	-0.086	0.2344	0.089	0.224
US Born	0.563***	0.172	0.926***	0.151	1.371***	0.165	0.751***	0.159
Education	-0.027	0.065	0.327***	0.061	0.577***	0.064	0.379***	0.065
Age	0.016	0.004	-0.006	0.004	-0.003	0.004	0.028***	0.004
Constant	-2.553	0.486	-0.192	0.048	0.158	0.048	-0.607	0.050
<i>N</i>	1747		1788		1775		1779	
Nagelkerke <i>R</i> Square	0.049		0.129		0.196		0.092	

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 2.** Muslim participation and interest

Independent Variables	Political Website		Discuss Politics		Importance of Politics		Follow Politics	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Gender	-0.420***	0.108	0.021	0.037	0.075	0.037	-0.121***	0.036
South Asian	-0.453**	0.207	0.057	0.070	0.021	0.072	-0.133***	0.071
African-American	-0.925***	0.188	-0.029	0.064	0.082	0.066	0.056	0.064
Middle Eastern	-0.193	0.221	-0.213***	0.075	-0.089	0.077	-0.104	0.075
US Born	0.651***	0.156	-0.144***	0.053	-0.123	0.054	0.189***	0.053
Education	0.565***	0.067	-0.166***	0.020	-0.099	0.021	0.170***	0.020
Age	-0.023***	0.004	0.004	0.001	-0.003**	0.001	0.004***	0.001
Constant	-0.925	0.448	2.477	0.149	2.237	0.153	2.969	0.150
<i>N</i>	1781		1779		1771		1779	
<i>R</i> Square	0.121		0.053		0.022	0.071		

\* $p < .010$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

*Note:* For first two regressions, logistical regression is used and the corresponding Nagelgerke *R* Square. For the latter, multiple regression is utilized, thus the Adjusted *R* Square is displayed.

**Table 3.** Muslim partisanship and vote choice

Independent Variables	Partisanship		Independents		Candidate Choice-2000		Candidate Choice-2004	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Gender	0.202*	0.122	-0.292***	0.112	0.077	0.133	0.467*	0.266
South Asian	-0.007	0.234	0.104	0.216	-0.432*	0.243	0.045	0.470
African-American	0.314	0.221	0.209	0.195	0.924***	0.225	0.567	0.444
Middle Eastern	0.118	0.249	0.171	0.230	-0.678***	0.267	0.338	0.504
US Born	0.596***	0.179	0.417***	0.158	0.755***	0.192	-0.290	0.354
Education	0.138***	0.066	0.342***	0.067	0.263***	0.077	0.313**	0.138
Age	0.017***	0.004	0.003	0.004	0.021***	0.005	-0.008	0.008
Party							1.584***	0.166
Constant	-1.250	0.489	-1.971	0.479	-0.390	0.057	-1.835	1.101
<i>N</i>	1237		1790		1270		1048	
Nagelkerke <i>R</i> Square	0.063		0.046		0.231		0.240	

\* $p < .010$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

Democratic parties, while the other measures whether one claims a party identification or is an independent. Women are significantly more likely than men to affiliate with the Democratic Party and develop party ties, similar to findings on women in the larger electorate (Conway, Steuernagel, and Ahern 2005). Among partisans, older respondents, those born in the United States and with higher levels of education are more likely to be Democrats. However, the American-born and educated are also more independent. While this seems surprising, it may well be because these respondents are currently transitioning from being Republican affiliates, and do not yet consider themselves Democrats. Interestingly, none of the ethnic/racial variables are statistically significant.

The final two models correspond with candidate choice in the 2000 and 2004 elections. I do not assess levels of voter turnout because many of the respondents are not yet United States citizens, which would prevent them from going to the polls. For the 2004 regression, I also incorporate partisanship while I do not for 2000, because partisanship corresponds with the 2004 context. In 2000, race and ethnicity are consistently statistically significant and operate in expected ways. While being South Asian or Middle Eastern is closely correlated with support for Bush, being African-American is highly correlated with support for Kerry. This is in line with findings regarding the Muslim Republican bloc vote led by South Asian and Middle Eastern communities. However in 2004, ethnicity and race fail to be statistically significant. This is likely because Muslims, regardless of subgroup, overwhelmingly supported Kerry, signifying a shift among this sample between both elections. In 2000, being United States born, educated, and older was related to voting for Gore. Being highly educated was also associated with Kerry voting in 2004. Gender differences also surfaced in 2004 with women supporting Kerry. Finally, to no surprise, Democratic respondents were more likely to vote for Kerry.

Overall, results for political participation indicate that there are few differences between women and men; women are only less likely to navigate political websites but engage in all other forms of activity on a similar basis as men. This stands in contrast to the larger American population where, except for voting, women tend to lag behind men in many forms of participation (Conway, Steuernagel, and Ahern 2005). Given dominant views about the relative dominance of men over women in Muslim communities, this is an interesting finding. However, women do not follow political news as frequently as men. While perhaps



unsurprising, education is nearly consistently associated with all political activities; the more highly educated are in a better position to navigate political waters and play a more active role in the political sphere. Older respondents are also generally more participatory than their younger counterparts, similar to findings among other groups (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rhode 2007). Almost without exception, whether one is born in the United States or abroad is pivotal: native born respondents have more potential exposure to American political processes, ultimately paying attention to and participating more in politics, confirming the exposure hypothesis. The only variable not significantly related to United States born status is importance of politics. Because this is closely linked to political interest, this null finding may be in line with the transferability hypothesis-political interest is less related to exposure to a new political system but more connected to the immigrants' interest developed in their homelands.

Middle Easterners are more prone to discuss politics on a frequent basis. However, being Middle Eastern has no relationship to any other activity or attitude analyzed thus far. On a nearly consistent basis, South Asians are the least participatory of ethnic/racial subgroups in rally attendance, media writing and petition singing, navigating political websites and following politics. While South Asians are generally well educated, this does not translate into political participation. African-Americans also lag behind in various forms of activity, specifically party and candidate work and navigating political websites. The one exception is their heightened participation in political rallies. While speculative, participation may be more geared toward racial consciousness raising activities or community crime prevention rather than support for specific political candidates. Findings for South Asians and African-Americans in this sample are generally consistent with those offered by Jamal (2005).

Analyzing partisanship and candidate choice reveal interesting patterns. Here gender is almost consistently a factor, as opposed to political participation. Generally, gender differences coincide with those evident within the larger population. Therefore, any gender gaps are not specific to Muslim-Americans but part of more general patterns. In 2000, African-Americans were clear supporters of Democratic candidate Al Gore while South Asians and Middle Easterners voted for Republican George W. Bush. However, four years later, among this same sample, race and ethnic divisions are no longer apparent-instead, all these major subgroups generally voted for the Democratic candidate. Also important,

partisanship is not related to race and ethnicity. This raises the possibility that partisanship has at least temporarily shifted among South Asian and Middle-Eastern Muslims, although this is impossible to confirm with these data. While findings are very instructive, turning to the case study will allow for some preliminary assessments regarding other potential changes since September 11 and reasons behind these shifts.

## LOCAL FINDINGS-MUSLIMS IN ST. LOUIS

St. Louis is an ideal setting because of its large and diverse Muslim population and it has not yet been the subject of scholarly research.<sup>13</sup> The Muslim population in greater St. Louis is approximately 70,000.<sup>14</sup> There is great ethnic and racial diversity in the population, including people of Bosnian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, and African descent as well as African-Americans. I conducted in-person interviews with members of four mosques: two predominately South Asian and Middle Eastern (Gateway Masjid, Daar-ul-Islam), a Bosnian (Madina Masjid) and an African-American mosque (Masjid al Muminoon).<sup>15</sup> Although I have a small sample ( $n = 45$ ), it is very diverse and large enough to explore questions lingering from more representative surveys. Beyond interviews, I also observed mosque lectures and special programs and participated in prayer services generally over a period of approximately six weeks per mosque, and interacted with congregations and leadership.<sup>16</sup> Overall, findings are based on 54 interviews conducted between February 2006 and November 2007, although most of my analysis here is drawn from congregant interviews as opposed to those based on meetings with imams and organization leaders.

Twenty-four interviewees are women, 21 are men. Corresponding to the distributions within the St. Louis Muslim populations, many (20) are of Asian descent. However, other groups including African-Americans, Middle Easterners, and Bosnians are represented, as well as white converts.<sup>17</sup> Most respondents are foreign born (25) and of these, nine are not yet citizens. Ages vary from 18 to 67. Education levels greatly diverge, although seemingly correlate with ethnicity. Those with higher degrees such as Ph.D. or M.D. are South Asian while white converts are more likely to have only a GED or Associates Degree. Most work outside the home although five housewives are represented, all but one of Asian or Middle Eastern descent. The sample also includes 11 full or part-time students, working on undergraduate

and graduate degrees. Incomes vary with some (besides students) earning as little as \$12,000 and others over \$100,000 (all either Middle Eastern or South Asian).<sup>18</sup>

Turning to political orientations, Muslims may affiliate with the Republican Party due to their social conservatism. Those of higher socio-economic status (South Asians in particular) may also support the Republican Party. However, some may have Democratic affiliations given the greater concern of the Democratic Party with issues of social justice. Moreover, due to the changing political climate, Muslims may have increased their Democratic support or may not affiliate with either party. Again, this will likely depend on ethnicity, race, and immigrant status. In fact, 22 (49%), have no party affiliation or are independent. Most independents do not lean toward a party when probed. However, one is closer to the Green Party, five to the Democratic Party, and only one to the Republican Party. Of party affiliates, all but two are Democrats, although the strength of partisan connection varies. Overall, a majority (58%) are either Democrats or closer to the Democratic Party, similar to national patterns.

The shift from Republican to Democratic affiliations is quite striking. Nearly one-quarter (22%) note a recent change in party affiliation, almost exclusively from Democrat to Republican.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, several (50%) were strong Republicans prior. South Asians or Middle Easterners made all Republican to Democrat shifts, virtually all attending either Middle Eastern or South Asian dominated mosques.

A major concern is when and why transformations occurred, particularly among formerly strong Republicans, including a Lebanese man, who said:

I consider myself a conservative and I believe in their (Republican) agenda and their platform as far as local issues. However I disagree with them on foreign policy. And I joined them hoping to change some of their understanding of my concern with the Middle East. . . I was a member of the \_\_\_Township Republican Organization and was also a member of the \_\_\_Republican Organization. I attended their meeting monthly. And I quit. No longer, I am rehabilitated.

Shifting after September 11, this centered on foreign policy and Iraq War: “I think his (Bush’s) agenda is domination and taking advantage of third world countries and people and resources. So, I think Bush is taking our country here in the wrong direction and I did not want him in the office.”

An Indian man offers a slightly different assessment regarding why he switched from strong Republican to Democrat: “I don’t know if it was because of September 11 or just the people who were in office but their views did not jibe with my view of what the Republican Party was.” He notes that this change was not in response to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, “The September 11 masterminds were apparently protected by the government in Afghanistan. That government didn’t want to turn people over and so you couldn’t expect the United States to do nothing. They had to do what they did.”

A Pakistani male in America just six years presents this appraisal:

When I first came here I was a very conservative Muslim. Good boy. And I went from there. I had no party affiliation. It took me a couple of years to figure it out, and then I decided Republican. . . then Bush got elected. Like seven months, eight months after that especially after September 11, the response to that was what changed my mind about what Bush was.

Women also acknowledge a shift in partisan allegiances but are not as forthcoming about why. An Indian woman states “I switched from Republican to Democrat after September 11. I didn’t like where the Republican Party was going.”

One African-American respondent switched from Democrat to Republican 10 years ago. Other than this, changes in partisanship since September 11 are limited to South Asians and Middle Easterners. Shifts began mainly in response to foreign policy but also due to perceptions that the Republican Party was increasingly inflexible. While many originally supported the Republican Party because of more socially conservative stances, this eroded. Rather than interpreting this as overwhelming Democratic support, there is still a large portion of independents in this sample. Shifts from Republican to Democratic support and large portions of independents are both reinforced by national surveys. Current Democratic support among former Republicans often lacks enthusiasm and may be fleeting. Conceivably, if a Republican candidate supported a different foreign policy, he or she could win the non-African-American-Muslim vote. Although some voted Republican as recently as the 2004 election, only two respondent are self-classified Republican.

All but one African-American are Democrats and their affiliations are stable. Among Bosnians, only one is a partisan. Apart from this Democratic man, most Bosnians do not discern party differences. A Bosnian woman originally categorizing herself as a Democrat explains,

“I really don’t know the difference between Democrats and the Republicans but I just know that democracies have more freedom here. I’m really not into the politics.” These Bosnian respondents are all apolitical while the sole Bosnian partisan discussed earlier is very politically engrossed. However, when he came to the United States nine years prior, he did not yet know enough about politics to form opinions or interest. This was changed, in part, by the Iraq War. Because of his citizenship status, however, he cannot yet vote. He is very assimilated and not religious. Last, a convert believes being Muslim means shirking other labels and political partisanship in a non-Islamic state is at odds with Islam. However, this is very much a minority view.

In terms of political ideology, responses vary tremendously. Many are liberal (33%) or moderate (31%) while fewer are conservative (20%). A handful (9%) are unsure or have not thought much about ideology and are mainly recent immigrants, particularly Bosnians. Finally, for 7%, ideology depends on particular policies. They are perhaps liberal on social welfare but conservative on reproductive issues or gay rights. Even those on one end of the spectrum believe in the issue dependency of ideology. For example, a young Pakistani asserts: “Some issues I’m conservative on, some liberal. Same-sex marriage I’d lean more toward conservative but more liberal in the sense of like the strictness of practicing religion.” A Syrian woman adds: “It depends on the issue. On social issues, on family values, corporal punishment, and abortion, I agree with conservatives more, but not how they go about it. I am more liberal on foreign affairs.” She notes that whereas she can pass values onto her daughters, she has no power over foreign affairs. While some report ideological shifts, all but five confirm ideological stability in contrast to partisanship. The direction of change is mixed.

Two important questions are whether greater social welfare liberalism combined with moral conservatism among this local sample also extends to Muslims nationally, and if this differs from the general American population. It appears that the answer to both questions is yes. One of the major findings from the 2007 Pew Report is that Muslims are relatively unique compared to the general public in their high degrees of liberalism on social welfare while being very conservative on issues of morality such as gay rights.<sup>20</sup>

Turning to basic political predispositions, responses are closely distributed between those uninterested in politics (15% or 33%), somewhat (14% or 31%), and very (16% or 36%). 15 (33%) believe political participation is very important, 16 (36%) somewhat, and 14 (31%) not

important. Again, all but one Bosnian consistently lack political interest: “Honestly, I’m not interested in politics at all. I don’t have the time.” Another responds: “I’ve been here for four years and I really don’t know American politics. I might become interested at some time in the future. But not yet because I really don’t have time.” This is not limited to Bosnians. Many say lack of citizenship makes it difficult to value participation. “It’s not very important to me to participate because I’m not a citizen right now. I think my input is not as valuable.”

Has political interest among Muslims changed? Most (24) say no. Generally, those very interested in politics have been so engrossed since adulthood and, if foreign born, were interested in politics in their homelands. Still 21 register a change with 17 increasingly interested. Many state that, since September 11, Muslims cannot help becoming more engrossed. Others cite interest increases with age, or as a result of American acclimation. Only four report declining interest, also mentioning the post September 11 context. A Syrian woman discussed her transformation:

I used to be really interested in politics, and especially right after September 11. But then there was a kind of disappointment that things really don’t change... How was I going to change things? Others have tried before, and I figured that I could spend my energy on other things and that led me closer to Islam.

Most keep-up with politics either occasionally (17) or most of the time (24). Very few rarely keep-up with public affairs (4). Generally, those interested in politics follow public affairs. Those whose political interest increased often follow the news closer, although exceptions exist: A Pakistani woman expresses dissatisfaction with the media portrayals of Muslims: “Ever since September 11, I don’t watch the news because I think it is just lies.” However, her political interest has increased. “I’m probably more concerned with situations well like atrocities that go on in Bosnia, you know Congo, Iraq.” Many also keep-up with news from their homelands on the internet or satellite television.

Middle Easterners, South Asians, and African-Americans typically are somewhat interested or very interested in politics. Two believe Islam leaves no room for politics. “Leave that (politics) to the politicians. I mean I study Islam. I’m trying to get closer to my Lord. If I ever get to the point where politics has to play a role in that I will, but now I’m just trying to memorize Koran and be a good Muslim.” The other declares

that although a past voter, he no longer participates in politics and just concentrates on religion. Both are white male converts to Islam. Again, this is a minority view.

Probing political participation in numerous activities, most engage in political discussion with family or friends at least sometimes (23) or often (10). Only 12 never or rarely discuss politics, some saying it is a waste of time or they do not know enough. Those interested in politics are more likely to discuss it. There is a gender gap in political discussion with men nearly twice as likely to discuss politics frequently as women.<sup>21</sup> Overall, 24 (53%) have attended a political meeting, 18 a political rally (40%), and 22 (49%) a demonstration.<sup>22</sup> Far fewer have worked for a political party or candidate nine (20%) and 14 (31%), respectively, almost all affiliated with the Democratic Party. Only nine (20%) wore a campaign button, five (11%) had a campaign sticker on their car, and 10 (22%) placed a campaign sign in their yard. 13 (29%) donated money to a candidate (nearly all Democrats) and 19 (42%) to a political party (again, nearly all to the Democrat Party). Many began financially contributing to politics only after September 11. 12 (27%) contacted the media and 19 (42%) public officials about a political issue, some directly and others through organizations like Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR). Men are more likely to engage in these activities than women, although some women are still quite politically active. South Asian, Middle Easterners, and African-Americans more often participate politically than Bosnians who tend not to have citizenship. Many respondents note a greater inclination to participate in the last few years. For example, an Indian woman became a Democratic delegate to the 2004 convention, although previously was an independent: "With the last election, I thought I just couldn't sit back and lose hope. Defeating Bush was a priority and that's when I started going to meetings and got elected as a delegate and got other Muslims involved."

Before discussing voting results, two caveats are in order. Eight could not vote because they were not citizens.<sup>23</sup> Another is on probation from federal prison. All others were registered to vote. Of the 33 registered to vote for the 2004 elections (one was not yet 18 by that time and another was not yet a citizen), three did not vote (two women of Bosnian descent and a woman originally from Somalia). Three women of diverse nationalities refused to disclose their vote choice. Of the 27 revealing their vote choice, the vast majority (23 or 85%) voted for Kerry while only four (15%) voted for Bush. Below are typical responses from Kerry voters:

“He (Kerry) was the lesser of the two evils...Both Democrats and Republicans are useless. Democrats haven’t done anything for this country and neither have Republicans. They’re just taking advantage of a two party system and it just keeps getting worse.”

“Kerry because I didn’t agree with Bush’s policies or what he did after September 11.”

“Kerry, because he was better than the alternative.”

“Kerry. I felt like I appreciated where he was standing for more. How he didn’t believe in the war.”

“I thought Bush was terrible. It was an anti-Bush vote. It’s not that I like Kerry. That’s my frustration is that I don’t like the Democrats much...It was the lesser of two evils. I seriously considered giving my vote to a third party candidate but I thought that was kind of a waste.”

Thus, many Democratic voters did so less for Kerry and more against Bush. It can hardly be seen as a ringing endorsement for the Democratic Party.<sup>24</sup>

Although clearly in the minority, some Muslims supported Bush in 2004. A Pakistani woman did, but not of her own accord. “My husband requested that I did. And the other candidate we found was not as strong.” A Pakistani male physician and long term Republican thinks Bush is honest, generally supporting him. Furthermore, he dislikes Edward’s work as a medical legal plaintiff lawyer. This was mentioned by other South Asian physicians, who, although Kerry voters, were bothered by his running mate’s suing medical professionals. A female physician with a mixed voting record voted for Bush “because I couldn’t decide between the both of them — they’re both equally bad.” However, she will likely vote Democrat in the next election. Finally, a very committed African-American Republican voted Bush because he supports his accomplishments.

It is instructive to discuss evidence of the Muslim voting bloc for Bush in 2000. Were St. Louis Muslims aware of this bloc? Did local communities vote as one? I asked respondents whether they were mobilized to vote Republican by mosques, organizations, or communities in 2000. Only South Asian and Middle Eastern respondents were aware of the Bush bloc. African-Americans were unaware probably because of their strong Democratic ties. Also, since few Bosnians were registered



voters, they were not attentive to this.<sup>25</sup> In fact, no Bosnian mosques existed in St. Louis in 2000. This bloc vote influenced some to vote for Bush in 2000 including a woman living in Chicago during the 2000 election. “We were actually requested by our mosque to vote Republican.”

Those shifting support from Bush to Kerry may have been mobilized to vote for Bush in 2000, but not 2004. A Bangladeshi man previously was a Democrat and voted for Clinton. However, he voted for Bush in 2000 because of the Islamic Society of North America’s (ISNA’s) and community elder’s opposition to Gore. He also mentioned Joe Lieberman as a reason for this disfavor since some thought his religion would make him more sympathetic to Israel. In 2004, this respondent voted for Kerry.

Many anecdotes demonstrate Bush’s support eroded between elections, largely in response to the Iraq War. But why had some not turned against the Republican Party when George H. W. Bush fought Iraq earlier? According to one shifter:

I don’t think George Bush the 1<sup>st</sup> wanted to transform the Middle East. His idea was to secure oil. All he wanted to do was get Iraq out of Kuwait. . .George W. Bush wanted to go to the Middle East even before 9–11 and wanted a reason to go there to spread democracy and change the governments. And I think that is different, that is interfering with Muslim lives.

I asked respondents about prior voting in presidential elections (if applicable) to examine shifts.<sup>26</sup> Four Kerry voters supported Bush in 2000, some voting Republican exclusively until 2004. Two other Bush voters in 2004 had mixed voting records. Therefore, findings largely confirm expectations that Muslim affiliation and support for the Republican Party faded between 2000 and 2004, but this was generally within the South Asian and Middle Eastern-Muslims communities. But are they conscious of their vote being affected by their Muslim identity?

Thirty-one (69%) said being Muslim affects how they vote to some extent while 10 said no, and four did not know.<sup>27</sup> Several thought being Muslim is tremendously influential:

“Do they (candidates) even listen to Muslims and are they willing to let Muslims work on their campaign and are they willing to give them any influential positions? That to me makes a difference.”

“Any candidate who is anti-Islam or Muslim, will make me think negatively of him and if he doesn’t have an open mind and understanding of the Muslim Community here, I will not vote for him.”

While some acknowledge this effect, it depends on the office with Muslim identity prominent in national elections, but less so as politics becomes local. When discussing policy issues, many reason through their opinions referencing Islamic teachings. Still, a few believe being Muslim had no bearing on their politics. “I don’t think our religion limits us in making choices as far as voting for different people.”

The vast majority indeed have been affected personally and politically by September 11 (78% and 69%, respectively). Personally, some are more religious. A few women started wearing hijab to disprove Muslim stereotypes. As one woman noted,

“Whatever I do affects how everybody thinks and if everybody I affect affects others, in a year’s time, I could affect 100,000 people... Every day is a new challenge. Every day somebody asks you about it [the headscarf]. It [headscarf] is a conversation piece and if people have questions you can explain it and you can see the differences, otherwise I would look like everyone else.”

Others observe discrimination:

“It was traumatic for me because for the first time in my life I didn’t feel American anymore. I felt very alone because I felt like a Muslim in a country where I was not welcome and I was under suspicion.”

“I think it’s affected me but...made me realize that I have to live my life more cautiously now, under a microscope, could be good though because the way I live my life, I’ve become more sympathetic to people in the Mideast.”

Politically, most have heightened political interest and activity:

“I think September 11 made Muslims realize how absolutely vulnerable they are and how they have absolutely no voice in the political system or in the media or in academics. My view of Muslims basically is that you do your job and then you go to the mosque, basically the triangle where Muslims live...Now because of September 11 people realized how absolutely vulnerable they are and I think that some of the cowards left the country and ran away but the ones who stayed behind I think at

the very least are trying to have financial involvement, put up a yard sign, or volunteer at a PBS drive.”

“Yeah. I think I got more involved. Not because of September 11 but because there were groups in our country that wanted to isolate Muslims and I think we were starting to become a cohesive voice, not any big voice, but we were getting a little bit of political strength and clout.”

“I’m much more vocal about things. I used to not talk about it so much. That’s how I was raised. It’s wrong not to do that. We as Muslims have an obligation. Wherever I go, I’m a Muslim; I represent the Islamic community much more. Before I was dormant. But being quiet is a luxury.”

As noted, several cite post-September 11 politics as the reason they switched from Republican to Democrat. Very few note decreased activity while some find no impact, sometimes because they were already vigorous: “Well it hasn’t affected me politically before because I was strongly involved still.”

Several are victims of religious discrimination personally, or know friends or family who are. More were aware of others who had been discriminated against than had experienced it directly (67% *versus* 51%). Those encountering discrimination include unfair treatment at work and verbal harassment in public spaces. Some of the most direct accounts are discussed by Middle Eastern-Americans:

“I was manager of an office of seven employees. Right away (after September 11) they started posting flyers on bulletin board against Muslims, against people like me. . . We should annihilate them all. I complained to my superiors and they didn’t do anything about it. There were more flyers directed toward me personally saying when are you going to leave this office, we don’t want you around. People like you aren’t welcome here.”

“I just feel people are more cautious than they were before around Muslims you know. I’m sure internally they have negative feelings but they cannot come out and say anything. They probably hold a grudge against us for what happened.”

Some mentioned being told in grocery stores, “Hey go back to your own country.” Muslim women wearing the headscarf, or hijab, are particularly vulnerable to this. While some women mentioned that they did not start wearing a hijab until after the attacks, one has gone back and forth on the

decision and has, for now, decided not to because she felt discriminated against. Many experiencing subtle discrimination, like stares at grocery stores or on the streets, downplay it, sometimes thinking: "It could all be in my head." Several note repeated troubles traveling by air, making a direct connection to their Muslim identities. Muslim discrimination, according to the President of CAIR-St. Louis is definitely more widespread since September 11, including St. Louis. Anecdotal evidence confirms this as do findings from larger surveys of Muslims.

Religious discrimination is rarely cited by African-Americans, although one states she was a victim of religious discrimination, possibly due to her wearing hijab. Although several Bosnians were discriminated against, they put this in a larger perspective: "In high school there were a lot of comments about Muslims, like you know, 'get out of here.' It doesn't matter, I've lived through worse."

Although some analysis on the effect of views on the War on Terror on partisanship has already been provided, a more general treatment of opinions on foreign military engagement is in order. Some 71% oppose the United States involvement in Afghanistan. Many do not feel like there were close connections between Afghanistan and the terrorist attacks to warrant invasion. Below are typical responses:

"How many Afghanis were on that plane?"

"I am under the impression that our interests in the Mideast or in the Afghanistan area are not really as pure."

Several voice conflicting feelings about the issue or don't know how they feel; some experienced a change of heart:

"Initially I did (support it). It was right after September 11 and Osama Bin Laden was supposed to be there. But we're not doing much to be there. What good is it?"

Only four (9%) support the mission: "the Taliban is not the answer. Women need an education and help with oppression from the ultraconservative right." Twenty percent say support is dependent on various factors or are unsure. While there is more ambivalence about Afghanistan, the Iraq War is opposed by nearly everyone, with only two supporting it, both Republicans. Although 93% oppose it, several mention they're happy that Saddam Hussein was deposed, but question United States' authority to remove him and the handling of the war.<sup>28</sup>

“I think it (the Iraq War) was based on a lot of misinformation. . . There was never a link between Al Qaeda and Iraq.”

“No weapons were there.”

While Bosnian respondents voice little about politics, often claiming they have no knowledge or interest, they uniformly express dissatisfaction with both conflicts, relating personal war experiences:

The only thing I don't like about the way the war is handled is that innocent people died. And we had a war back in Bosnia and most of my family members died. Innocent people. . . I don't know why, you know, why can't they go and resolve that between them, the politicians, and not involve innocent people. . . That's the only thing. People are dying for no reason. I don't like that.

This low support for Republican initiated policies is likely strongly associated with partisan switching and also a general opposition to the Republican Party as evidenced prior. Many cite disappointment with Bush's entry into Iraq, general foreign policy, and treatment of Muslims domestically and abroad. The war is repeatedly cited as the most important issue America faces while Muslim discrimination is the biggest problem Muslims encounter.

Findings from the qualitative study reinforce some findings from the quantitative analysis. Many voted for Kerry in the 2004 elections and comparable numbers are Democratic affiliates, at least currently. At the same time, many are independents or partisan leaners, indicating their partisanship may be in flux. Substantial portions switched party allegiances between 2000 and 2004. Evidence of a Muslim bloc vote in 2000 and how this led to a fall out in 2004 is clear. However, this is only the case for South Asians and, to some extent, Middle Eastern Americans.

In contrast, Bosnians are not yet acclimated to the American political system and tend to be apolitical. There is no clear pattern of partisanship. However, there is also evidence that when Bosnians have been in the United States longer and are more Americanized, they become more political, and take on Democratic affiliations. For example, the lone politically attuned Bosnian respondent has been in the United States for nearly a decade and has a high level of education compared to other Bosnians. Therefore, Bosnians living in the United States longer and generally more acclimated and educated may be Democratic affiliates for

reasons outlined earlier. Last, African-American-Muslims regularly participate in politics and have a history of strongly supporting Democratic candidates.

Among those registering a change in partisanship, many cite the Republican involvement in Iraq and support of various policies restricting Muslims domestically and abroad as pivotal in their reevaluation. Interestingly, responses do not indicate that the conflict in Afghanistan is responsible for changes. Regardless of specific partisan shifts, the vast majority have been affected personally and politically by September 11. Also important is the fact that nearly half cite heightened interest in politics and several note a greater inclination to participate in the last few years. Only a handful have become less concerned with politics. Their actions correspond with this. Nearly all who were eligible to vote voted in the 2004 presidential elections. They also have high rates of participation in various other political activities including rally attendance, donating money to candidates, and discussing politics. Therefore, regardless of the hardships they may currently feel, Muslim-Americans are not hiding in the shadows, but are highly visible as participants in the political sphere. Gender differences are more prominent than found in the national sample—fewer women tend to participate in political activity than men, although differences are generally small.

## DISCUSSION

Overall, both the quantitative and qualitative analyses illustrate that Muslim-Americans are heavily participating in politics and generally value the importance of politics. Their presence in the political sphere has actually increased since September 11. Whether or not this is indeed a direct result over fears of Muslim persecution is still in question, although findings are in line with this possibility. Furthermore, they vote according to what they perceive their interests as Muslims are. Currently, this entails supporting Democratic candidates and adopting Democratic partisan affiliations. While this is not new for African-Americans, this is a departure for many South Asians and Middle Easterners. Overall, it is crucial to treat Muslim-Americans as diverse subgroups — they are not a monolith.

One of the most important factors to take into account when dealing with political attitudes and participation is whether respondents are born in the United States. Those who are from the United States originally are generally more participatory, which could be linked to greater exposure to American

politics. Being more educated is also important for political participation and the development of various attitudes that correspond with both Democratic support and voting records. Gender generally operates similarly among Muslim-Americans as it does within the larger society, although there are fewer gender gaps in behavior among Muslim-Americans. While larger differences in participation between women and men are clear in the qualitative analysis, these are still relatively slight.

What do these results mean for the future of Muslims and politics in America? While it is tempting to conclude that recent changes in political interest, partisanship, and vote choice will continue, this is not at all certain. While there are clear differences in partisanship and voting among South Asians and Middle Easterners between the 2000 and 2004 elections, data prior to 1996 is non-existent. This raises the possibility that these groups were not necessarily always strong advocates of the Republican Party or candidates prior to September 11. Even if they were, changes in 2004 may be short lived. However, it is reasonable to assume that Muslim Democratic support will continue through at least the 2008 election given the respective stances of the party nominees.

As the population of Muslim voters continues to grow, it would be in both parties interest to pay more attention to these increasingly important groups, who, although hardly a monolith, are beginning to speak in a more unified voice and voting as a bloc. While their overall population in the United States is only about 2%, and is highest in traditionally Democratic states like California, New York, and New Jersey, Muslims have the potential to make a political impact in swing states such as Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio where they are also heavily concentrated (Kosmin and Lachman 1993). Given that election outcomes have been extremely close in the 2000 and 2004 contests, if even half of Michigan's Muslim population of 2% turns out to vote, and largely vote Democratic, this could make the difference in 2008.

## NOTES

1. Since the United States Census does not ask respondents about religion, the quantity of Muslims in the United States is a source of debate. Some estimates are as high as six to eight million, or slightly less than 3% of the population (Ba-Yunus and Kone 2004; Nimer 2004). National surveys conducted over the last decade suggest a more conservative estimate of about two million and are based more on sound scientific methodology than previous studies. *Ibid.*, 414. See also Pew Report 2007. See Smith 2002 for an overview of population estimates.

2. This group has changed its name several times since its inception and is currently known as the Mosque Cares Ministry.

3. CAIR news release. "American Muslim PAC Endorses George W. Bush for President," October 23, 2000.

4. This is similar to Pew 2007 findings that 71% voted for Kerry, 14% voted for Bush and 15% for another candidate or refused to answer.

5. According to the 2007 Pew Report, 63% considered themselves Democrats, 11% Republican, and 26% independent or unaffiliated. This is a bit different from Zogby findings, but it must be kept in mind that this survey was conducted three years after Zogby, during which time there were more shifts. Findings actually thus indicate an even larger movement toward the Democratic Party than prior.

6. In 2001, the partisan breakdown was 40% Democrats, 23% Republicans, 28% Independent. Since this was already after September 11, it is possible some respondents who had been Republican prior did not acknowledge this by this point.

7. While there is no data on Muslim partisanship in 1996, some unscientific exit polls conducted by Muslim organization indicate that most Muslims voted for Clinton, although his support among many South Asians was relatively low, particularly for Pakistanis (Duran 1997).

8. South Asian income is higher and conservative outlooks generally seen as stronger than Middle Easterners (Leonard 2003).

9. Personal interview with Ann Rynearson, Cultural Affairs Director of the International Institute of St. Louis, October 3, 2006.

10. Respondents were first asked if they were Muslim, which all of the 1,846 respondents confirmed.

11. The Pew Research Center has more recent data available through their 2007 Muslim American study. The following are reasons why I utilized Zogby data instead. While the limitations of Zogby's sample selection were noted, only a small portion of the Pew sample (354 of 1050) was selected through random digit dialing in areas known to have larger population densities of Muslims. Most samples were generated from a commercial database list based on common Muslim first and last names, similar to the Zogby procedure. While Pew's sample shows a bit of improvement over Zogby's, it is hampered by its lack of political questions. While questions targeting policy views, voter turnout, and presidential vote choice in 2004 are available, there are no other questions dealing with forms of political participation including those analyzed in this article such as writing the media or discussing politics. Moreover, Zogby asks respondents how they voted in the 2000 election, so potential changes between then and 2004 are probed. Prior voting records are not the focus of Pew.

12. 146 of such interviews were conducted.

13. An exception to this is the work of Edward E. Curtis IV (2002) who only analyzed African-American mosques in St. Louis.

14. According to Muhammad Nur Abdullah, the former leader of the Islamic Foundation of Greater St. Louis (IFGSL) and former President of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), This may very well be a conservative estimate, since the population of Bosnian Muslims alone is about 52,000.

15. Jum'ah (Friday prayer) attendance is approximately 800 for Daar-ul-Islam, 100 for Gateway Masjid, 200 for Madina Masjid, and 100 at Masjid al Muminoon. While general membership (people who are associated in any way with the religious life of the mosque) is much higher than this, far fewer are regular attendees of services. Moreover, attendance at other prayer services is generally much lower than Jum'ah. All information on attendance is derived from personal interviews with the imams of the respective facilities and author observation. The author can also provide more specific data on each mosque via email upon request.

16. This time was not always consecutive. I interviewed three imams and six leaders of various local organizations including the President of the local chapter of the Council of Islamic American Relations (CAIR-St. Louis), the directors of the Islamic Information Center, the Interfaith Partnership of Greater St. Louis (a Muslim woman), and the cultural affairs coordinator of the International Institute.

17. 17 are South Asian-including 10 Pakistanis, five Indians, one Bengali, and one Afghan. Three are South East Asian-Malaysian and Indonesian. Six are Middle Eastern (three Middle Easterners, two Persians, and a man of mixed Egyptian/white American). Eight are African-American, including a Sudanese American. Two were African born. Five are Bosnians. Finally, four are white Americans, all converts.

18. Not everyone was comfortable disclosing financial information. Instead, they placed themselves in income groups like lower middle class.



19. One was more Democratic in the past and then became a Republican, one was an Independent before affiliating with the Democratic Party, and one was more of a Democrat before becoming an independent.

20. Muslims show a very high degree of support for bigger government (70% versus 43% among the general population) and government aid to the poor (73% versus 63%). However, a majority of Muslims believe that homosexuality should be discouraged (61% versus 38% of the general population) and believe that the government should do more to protect morality (59% versus 37%). Pew Report 2007, 7.

21. The proportion of women stating they never discuss politics was 33% versus 19% for men. The proportion of women sometimes engaging in political discussion was 54% versus 48% of men. Finally, the proportion of women talking about politics often was 13% for women but 33% for men.

22. I asked them about their participation in these activities throughout their history, not just in the last few years. However, some respondents noted if participation was far in the past.

23. I never asked respondents about their citizenship status. They would disclose this when I asked about voter registration.

24. Of course, among Kerry voters in the wider population, a common reason stated for voting for Kerry was that he was the lesser of two evils. Thus, this was not unique to Muslims (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 2007).

25. None of these respondents said that mosque leadership mobilized them to vote Republican in 2000. Merely, many as members of larger Islamic organizations and those talking to other congregants about politics were influenced to do so.

26. Some respondents were not of voting age in prior elections or were ineligible to vote because of citizenship status or had not yet immigrated to the United States.

27. For those ineligible to vote, I asked them to think about it hypothetically.

28. An Egyptian stated that it was good that Hussein was out of power, but did not firmly take a stance on the war.

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## APPENDIX

### Questions and Coding for Regression Models

#### *Dependent Variables*

Are you an active member of your particular party? No = 0, Yes = 1

Have you ever attended a rally in support of a politician or a cause? No = 0, Yes = 1

Have you ever called or written the media or politician on a given issue, or have you signed a petition? No = 0, Yes = 1

Have you ever given a contribution or volunteered your time or services to a political candidate? No = 0, Yes = 1

Have you ever visited a political website? No = 0, Yes = 1

How often do you discuss politics with family and friends?

1 = Always, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Hardly ever, 4 = Never, 5 = Not Sure

How important is it for you to participate in politics?

1 = Very Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 3 = Not Important, 4 = Not sure

How often would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs?

1 = Hardly at all, 2 = Only now and then, 3 = Some of the time, 4 = most of the time, 5 = not sure

0 = Republican, 1 = Democrat

0 = Partisan, 1 = Independent

2000 vote choice 0 = Bush, 1 = Gore

2004 vote choice 0 = Bush 1 = Kerry

### ***Independent Variables***

**Gender** 0 = male, 1 = female

**Ethnicity** as series of dummy variables-the others and not sures are included, but are just coded as 0

South Asian = 1, otherwise = 0

African-American = 1, otherwise = 0

Middle Eastern = 1, otherwise = 0 (includes Arab and Middle Eastern)

**Age** Continuous Variable

**Education** 1 = some HS, 2 = HS degree, 3 = Some College, 4 = College Degree

**Born in US (US BORN)-**

0 = No, 1 = Yes

**Party** 1 = Republican, 2 = Independent, Not sure, other 3 = Democrat

### **Sample Selection for St. Louis respondents**

I began researching each Muslim community by first interviewing the Imam of the mosque to get a sense of the congregation. Following this, I attended various mosque programs including Friday Prayer, Sunday school, and special lectures over a period of several weeks. While I mostly observed, I did pray with the congregation. In order to select my sample of respondents, I would generally approach women who I met at the mosque and ask them if they would be interested in interviewing with me. If agreeable, I met respondents at one of three locations: their private residences (only upon their suggestion), a public room at a coffee shop, and a conference room at the mosque. Because of gender norms, I approached women since it is generally unacceptable to approach men, although this was possible at times particularly at non-religious evening lectures. Respondents often provided me with a list of other Muslim contacts, resulting in a snowball effect. All interviews, except for one, were tape-recorded and transcribed. Each subject, except for public leaders, was given a respondent number thus protecting their anonymity. I asked approximately one hundred questions, a little more than half of which were open ended. I tended to use the same coffee shop in St. Louis which has a private room, protecting anonymity. Most interviews were conducted either there or at the respondents' own residences.

### **Questions**

Specific questions were based mostly on the National Election Studies but also the World Values Survey and the Zogby International/Project MAPS 2004 Survey. Several questions were also written by the author. I asked various follow up questions based on the respondent's answers. While I made sure that each topic and related questions were addressed, I was also willing to go in the direction the respondent wanted to take me. Completion time varied from approximately 30 minutes to two hours, averaging 70 minutes. I am happy to email readers a list of questions asked to congregants, imams, and organizational leaders.