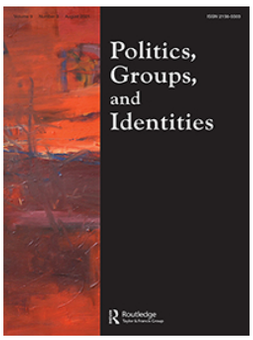

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Beyond generalized ethnocentrism: Islam-specific beliefs and prejudice toward Muslim Americans

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ABSTRACT

Much of what we know theoretically and empirically about attitudes toward racialized minorities in the US is predicated on early research on white opinion toward Black Americans. Although Muslim Americans have garnered considerable political attention and have been exposed to tremendous scrutiny and discrimination since 9/11, not many theoretical insights apart from generalized ethnocentric accounts have been offered to explain unfavorable attitudes toward this population, let alone the prevalence of community-level opposition toward proposed mosque projects. We offer a theoretical perspective grounded in orientalist notions of Islam and set group-specific measures focused on the perceived beliefs and behaviors of Muslim Americans against indicators of generalized ethnocentrism. Our findings highlight the limitations of applying general models of intergroup relations to understanding the dynamics of prejudice toward Muslim Americans. We conclude by encouraging scholars to consider more distinctive, group-specific constructs that could aid advocacy groups and policymakers to combat prejudice and discrimination against American Muslims.

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Muslim Americans; prejudice; public opinion; race and ethnicity; mosque

Introduction

Prejudice toward minorities in the United States (US) has received significant scholarly attention (Kinder and Sears 1981; Sidanius and Pratto 2001; Bobo and Tuan 2006; Kinder and Kam 2010). With the candidacy and the subsequent election of Barack Obama, there has been a revival of research on racial resentment, ethnocentrism, and old-fashioned racism (Valentino and Brader 2011; Kam and Kinder 2012; Tesler 2012; Parker and Barreto 2014; Wilson and King-Meadows 2016). While Kinder and Kam (2010)'s recent work on ethnocentrism provides important insights into in-group pride and out-group hostility, group-specific explanations can further broaden our understanding of negative affect toward different populations. This is particularly the case for American Muslims, a group for which no well-established theoretical lens exists.

Delving deeper into predictors of mass attitudes toward Muslim Americans is necessary given the tremendous hostility that this group has experienced. Over the past two and a

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half decades, US Muslims have been exposed to unprecedented levels of hate crimes (Rippy and Newman 2006; Lichtblau 2016),[1] evaluated more negatively than nearly any other religious, ethnic or racial group (Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Lajevardi and Oskooii 2018), exposed to a variety forms of societal and political discrimination (Oskooii 2016; Dana et al. 2018; Hobbs and Lajevardi 2019), and their places of worship attacked and denied construction or expansion permits (ACLU 2018). Moreover, the 2016 presidential election has further jeopardized the socio-political well-being of Muslim Americans (Calfano, Lajevardi, and Michelson 2017), with Donald Trump employing explicit Islamophobic rhetoric to galvanize voters (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018) and instituting a Muslim travel ban executive order shortly after being elected into the oval office (Collingwood, Lajevardi, and Oskooii 2018). Perhaps unsurprisingly, recent work has demonstrated that anti-Muslim attitudes played a prominent role in explaining support for President Trump (Lajevardi and Abrajano 2018; Lajevardi and Oskooii 2018).

While recent scholarship has primarily focused on the consequences of anti-Muslim attitudes and discrimination in a variety of domains and settings, less attention has been directed at asking what explains such attitudes in the first place. Existing accounts have predominantly relied on general out-group measures to explain anti-Muslim sentiment. One key study conducted by Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner (2009) suggests that attitudes toward Muslim Americans follow the same patterns of attitudes toward other minorities.[2] According to the authors, rather than identifying a new frame through which to view Muslim Americans, the public simply views this group as a 'band of others' or a new minority out-group 'on the block.' For instance, individuals who believe that immigrants are changing American society for the worse or that the income gap between Blacks and whites is attributed to the lack of intelligence and hard work on the part of African Americans are also likely to look down on Muslim Americans. While there is evidence of some overlap in out-group prejudice (Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 2009; Schaffner 2013), we argue that citizens also stigmatize groups in fairly nuanced ways. Indeed, Sides and Gross (2013) have shown that stereotypes related to violence and trustworthiness are predictive of unfavorable attitudes toward Muslim Americans and attitudes toward the War on Terror, while those related to laziness and unintelligence, which are often associated with attitudes toward Black Americans, are not.

In line with the contention that group attitudes have a *specific content* (Dovidio et al. 2010), we argue that citizens have adopted fairly nuanced, group-specific beliefs about Muslim Americans, much of which is rooted in the long-standing orientalist depictions of Islam in the West. Since many survey instruments are limited insofar as they typically contain one group-rating item toward Muslims,[3] scholars have not yet examined whether group-specific beliefs explain negative assessments of this population *above and beyond* more generalized ethnocentric measures. By generalized ethnocentric accounts we refer to the use of measures specific to other racial or cultural out-groups (e.g. Blacks and immigrants) to explain negative assessments of Muslim Americans.

Our study accounts for this shortcoming by comparing two Islam-specific variables that were developed with theoretical focus and empirical practicality to two out-group measures that tap into a sense of cultural threat toward immigrants and racial resentment toward Black Americans. Through a series of analyses we demonstrate that Islam-specific variables most powerfully explain negative affect toward Muslim Americans and

opposition to mosque projects, and that the relationship between our group-specific measures and unfavorability toward American Muslims is not significantly rooted in more generalized ethnocentric measures. An original survey experiment further demonstrates that the activation of deep-seated, orientalist tropes of Muslims can move individuals to oppose the construction of mosques or Islamic centers in their respective cities or towns. While the experimental findings are somewhat limited in scope, they help assuage concerns about endogeneity. Overall, our study sheds light on a timely and important topic that can assist scholars, policymakers, and advocacy groups to better understand and perhaps even combat prejudice and discrimination against Muslims in America.

In what follows, we draw insights from the theoretical framework of Orientalism to make the case that the depiction of Muslims as culturally inferior, opposed to democratic norms, and anti-Christian have long existed in the US and thus, present a unique and independent force in shaping mass attitudes. This section further highlights the explicit use of orientalist frames since 9/11 to galvanize opposition against Muslim Americans and their places of worship. Next we outline our central argument and examine our expectations with an original multi-state public opinion survey of registered voters and a survey experiment. We conclude by demonstrating that Islam-specific beliefs focused on the threat of Sharia law and misconceptions about mosques play a key and independent role in explaining distaste toward Muslims and resistance against the construction of mosques.

Theoretical framework

While relying on general theories of intergroup relations is a good place to start, we contend there are quite unique elements behind mass evaluations of American Muslims. To better understand how citizens perceive Muslims, we primarily draw from the discourse of Orientalism (Said 1978, 1997, 1980, 2003). Said took a critical view on how the Occident (West) has historically viewed the Orient (East). Orientalism, in particular, refers to the 'distorted lens' through which the West has looked at and explained the Muslim world. This distorted lens has led to inaccurate depictions of how Muslims, Arabs or Middle Easterners think, behave, and interact, creating serious misconceptions regarding the belief structure of Muslims world-wide.[4] According to Said, misrepresentations, assumptions, and negative stereotypes are overwhelming, culminated overtime in 'subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arabo-Islamic peoples and their cultures' in the arts, literature, news media, political discourse, and scholarly research (Said 1978). In turn, the prevalence of negative images of Islam has created a mindset among ordinary citizens and elites that Muslims are culturally inferior, uncivilized, and out of touch with modern social and democratic norms. In criticizing the news media in specific, Said argued: 'Very little of the detail, the human density, and the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report on the Arab world.' Instead, 'A series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world [are] presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression' (Said 1980).

Following Said, scholars have shown that the orientalist discourse on Muslims, which depicts them as mindless or dogmatic followers of a strict and militant faith that is intolerant of other ways of life, is widely disseminated across various social, political, and

academic platforms. While Said's work identified a coherent discourse that lasted for more than a century during the post-colonial era, additional research has identified similar patterns in contemporary times. Little (2008) and Lockman (2009), for instance, have shown that orientalist tendencies still continue to exist in Western culture and politics. Little (2008) explored the role of the US in the Middle East since 1945 and argued that Orientalism is a framework that has affected how the Arab world, the Middle East, and Islam are seen and envisioned as people and a culture by the American public and policymakers. Specifically, orientalist discourse has seeped into US popular culture through mediums like photography that are disseminated through widely-circulated magazines such as in the *National Geographic* (Lutz and Collins 1993). Shaheen (2003) has identified similar pattern in hundreds of Hollywood productions over a span of several decades.

Research further suggests that the events on 11 September 2001 simply resurrected and amplified many of the same old anti-Muslim stereotypes that existed well before the War on Terror. Dabashi (2017)'s analysis of political cartoons, media portrayals and post-9/11 rhetoric toward the Middle East and Islam demonstrates that there has been a resurgence in the centuries old orientalist portrayals of Islamic peoples outlined by likes of Said. Dunn (2001)'s extensive content analysis reveals similar patterns in other contexts. He finds that mosque opposition at the local level in Australia dates back to as early as 1980s, and is informed by stereotypes of Islam that are dispersed in the national media, which often portrays Muslims as intolerant of democratic norms. Overall, the message for the average western observer has long been clear: Islam is profoundly different from, and poses a threat to, western ethos, beliefs, and democratic principles (Said 1997, 1980). Given that some prominent academics have expressed such views (Huntington 1997; Lewis 2002; Pipes 2003), it is only reasonable to believe that the average person may have also been influenced by the specific ways in which the Orient has long been portrayed by the Occident.

Relying on this framework, we contend that unfavorable views toward Muslim Americans is rooted in the reiterative deployment of orientalist notions of the Arab-Islamic tradition, their non-Christian beliefs, and the specific characterization of Muslims and Arabs as culturally inferior, opposed to democratic norms, and a rising challenge to the modern Christian world. Given this context, we argue for the inclusion of group-specific constructs in models of anti-Muslim sentiment. Scholars have certainly taken similar approaches to shed light on attitudes toward African Americans (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman 1997), Latinos (Dovidio et al. 2010; Gonzalez-O'Brien 2018), Asian Americans (Kim 1999; Kawai 2005), and other minorities (Konitzer et al. 2018) because different groups have distinctive histories and varying levels of power and status. That is, other theories have also been explicit even though some underlying processes may contribute to prejudice across social groups (Zarate et al. 2004).

Our theoretical priors suggest a similar dynamic at work for Muslim Americans. The construction of Muslims as anti-democratic and anti-Christian taps into an attitudinal dimension that is not identical to anti-Black racism, nationalistic views on English-only laws or immigrants from Latin America. Indeed, Panagopoulos (2006)'s examination of a set of public opinion polls related to Arabs and Muslim Americans indicates that many citizens express quite specific concerns over Islam's *incompatibility with Western values*, despite possessing low levels of knowledge about even the most basic elements of Islam.

Distinctive beliefs of Islam and its adherents were vividly on display during the 2010 Park51 Islamic Center controversy in lower Manhattan, and have gained more traction since.[5] Shortly after the proposed project was approved by the local community board, an opposition group rapidly spread fabricated stories regarding the 'true' purpose of the project and the 'role of Islam' in the United States. Relying heavily on long-standing orientalist notions of Islam, Pamela Geller, a New York political activist and the chief spokesperson against the project, ridiculed Islam and Muslim Americans in many of her nationally televised appearances on ABC, CNN, NBC, and FOX (Barnard and Feuer 2010). During a CNN interview, she argued that the 'Monster Ground Zero Mosque' is aimed at 'Islamic domination and expansionism,' and that 'Based on research, four out of five mosques preach hate and preach incitement to violence.'[6] Prominent politicians joined Geller in spreading similar orientalist depictions of Muslims. Newt Gingrich, a one-time Republican presidential candidate, claimed that Park51 is 'an assertion of Islamist triumphalism,' and part of 'an Islamist cultural-political offensive designed to undermine and destroy our civilization' (Hertzberg 2010).

Since the backlash against the Park51 project, opposition to the construction of mosques has extended to numerous communities across the country. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), over 300 anti-mosque incidents have been reported since 2010, with a sizable portion of such incidents dealing with efforts to block or deny zoning permits for the construction or expansion of mosques or Islamic Centers.[7] In Murfressboro, Tennessee, for instance, the proposed expansion of an existing Islamic center faced a lawsuit, numerous demonstrations, and vandalization of its construction site (Kauffman 2010). Local residents, with the support of several Republican politicians, aggressively fought to halt construction plans by relying on common orientalist mischaracterization of Islam and the 'true' purpose of mosques. Republican Lieutenant governor, Ron Ramsey, linked Islam to a cult, and congressional candidate, Lou Ann Zalenik, claimed that the center is 'part of a political movement designed to fracture the moral and political foundation of Middle Tennessee' (Kauffman 2010). During litigation, the plaintiffs argued that Islam is not a religion and that the center is a conspiracy to impose 'Sharia law' on the United States (Peralta 2010). On the other side of the country, opponents of a new Islamic center in California echoed this type of rhetoric, arguing that the construction of a mosque would clash with the local atmosphere and possibly '… turn the community of 105,000 into a haven for Islamic extremists' (Willon 2010). To curtail such plans, the organizers announced a one-hour 'singing-praying-patriotic rally' and encouraged participants to bring 'bibles, flags, signs, dogs, and singing voices' (Claverie 2010).

Extensive investigation into anti-Islam movements across the country by the Center for American Progress further demonstrates that Islam has been characterized as a totalitarian ideology committed to replacing American laws with Sharia, and that mosques are akin to so-called Trojan horses bent on disseminating radical Islamic theology (Wajahat et al. 2011). Furthermore, the active participation of Muslims in civic, social, and political life has been frequently linked to attempts of 'infiltrating America with radical Islam' (Wajahat et al. 2011), despite research findings challenging such assertions (Dana, Barreto, and Oskooii 2011; Acevedo and Chaudhary 2015; Dana, Wilcox-Archuleta, and Barreto 2017; Westfall 2018). A prime example of this type of discourse emerged in Yorba Linda, California where Muslims who were raising money for local social programs to help the poor were met by local residents waving American flags and chanting 'No Sharia law' and 'Go back home' (Norman 2011).

In addition to mosque-related incidents, numerous states have attempted to pass policies to address the threat of 'Sharia Law' (Mitchell and Toner 2016). According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), 201 anti-Sharia law bills have been introduced in 43 states since year 2010, with many representatives of the bills mentioning the invasion of Sharia law in their introductions (SPLC 2018). Clearly, theses events coupled with research demonstrating how Islam has long been portrayed to be at odds with Western values and way of life (Said 1997, 1980; Esposito 1999; Shaheen 2003) demonstrates the need to develop more group-specific measures to better understand anti-Muslim sentiment and opposition to mosques in the contemporary US.

Argument and expectations

In examining anti-Muslim attitudes, Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner (2009) specifically argue that the most important factor associated with how citizens evaluate politically relevant groups is how they feel about similarly positioned groups. This perspective is rooted in the notion that in-group favoritism and out-group intolerance arise from social differentiation, a process through which individuals recognize that they are both similar and different from others (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Using data from the 2004 American National Election Study and surveys conducted by Pew from 2000 to 2007, Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner (2009) find that negative evaluations of racial (e.g. African Americans), cultural (e.g. immigrants), and religious (e.g. Jews and Mormons) minorities were predictive of unfavorable views toward Muslims. Based on this observation, they conclude that Muslims are part of a 'band of others,' within which a broad range of general out-group attitudes equally apply.

While Kalkan and colleagues make a valid argument and have greatly contributed to the understanding of negative attitudes toward Muslim Americans, their research has two notable shortcomings stemming from data limitations. First, their data are limited by a lack of unique questions and question-wording effects. Aside from a question about concerns over terrorism, there is no question that allows them to find a unique set of variables that only apply toward Muslims. The lack of detailed questions probing attitudes toward Muslims limits their ability to include any Islam-specific factors in their analyses, and therefore their ability to conclude that general out-group attitudes provide the best possible explanation. Second, the general questions that they did examine also come with their own constraints. The authors rely on a 100-point feeling thermometer question toward 'Muslims' that is not specifically about American Muslims. Because 'Muslims' as a group could be seen in a global or Middle Eastern context, it is possible that some respondents were not prompted to think about American Muslims when evaluating 'Muslims.' Further, the item is part of a feeling-thermometer battery of about thirty different groups in society and politics. Asking respondents to evaluate Muslims and 29 other groups creates an opening for individuals to conflate their responses. Krosnick (1999) identifies significant acquiescence bias in such studies where similar questions are repeated in batteries with similar answer categories [See also, Krosnick and Fabrigar (1997)]. In contrast, a less fraught measure of attitudes toward American Muslims would ask specific questions about Muslim Americans in a survey context not directly connected to numerous out-groups where the possibility of conflating answers could pose a threat to inference.

We address the two aforementioned empirical limitations and introduce a new theoretical perspective to explain antipathy toward Muslim Americans. To clarify, we agree that general out-group affect or 'othering' can explain anti-Muslim sentiments and that there is value in relying on general models of intergroup relations. Our contention is that a more content-specific explanation will provide insights into what additional factors shape anti-Muslim attitudes in the US. To this end, we introduce two Islam-specific measures, which we outline in more detail in the ensuing sections. The first measure – *Mosque Cultural Threat* – is related to the long-standing perception that Islam is at odds with American (Christian) values, and thus, mosques, where Islamic teachings take place, supposedly discourage the adoption of core American ethos and values. This perception, as we previously demonstrated, played a prominent role in a series of anti-mosque movements, and has been consistently expressed in a series of public opinion polls (Panagopoulos 2006). The second measure – *Sharia Law Threat* – extends beyond perceptions of what Muslims supposedly believe in and taps more directly into their supposed intentions to undermine the American way of life. That is, their desire to ignore American laws by imposing their 'outmoded' religious code (Sharia Law) onto the American public. This perception, while rooted in how the West has long viewed the Muslim world (Said 1978, 1980), was particularly evident in the discourse surrounding anti-mosque movements across the country, with Frank Gaffney, President of Center for Security policy, making the following assertion in 2011:

> Most mosques in the United States are actually engaged in – or at least supportive of – a totalitarian, seditious agenda they call Shariah. Its express purpose is undermining and ultimately forcibly replacing the US government and its founding documents. In their place would be a 'caliph' governing in accordance with Shariah's political-military-legal code.[8]

To reiterate, we expect negative evaluations of racial and cultural out-groups to be associated with prejudice toward Muslim Americans. While there is some overlap in how citizens evaluate different out-groups, we expect group-specific perceptions about the role of mosques and Sharia law in American society to independently impact evaluations of Muslim Americans. Specifically, citizens who believe that mosques discourage Muslims from adopting American values and customs and who agree that Muslims would rather follow Sharia law rather than the laws of the US are more likely to not only view Muslim Americans negatively, but to also oppose the construction of mosques or Islamic Centers in their respective communities. To be clear, we do not assume that these two measures fully capture anti-Muslim sentiments. Our objective is to move research beyond generalized ethnocentric models and toward content-specific explanations of intergroup relations.

Data and measures

To evaluate our claim regarding the interplay between generalized ethnocentrism, Islam-specific beliefs, and anti-Muslim attitudes, we fielded an original public opinion survey in three states: Arkansas, North Carolina, and Washington. Our survey was administered with live callers between 10–30 October 2011, and consists of a representative sample of registered voters who were randomly selected from publicly available landline and cell-phone-only household lists. The aforementioned states were chosen as part of a data

collection collaboration between three academic institutions, which enabled us to include a set of unique Muslim-related measures in the survey.

Our first outcome variable is a four-point measure of favorability toward Muslim Americans, and was constructed with the following question: 'Thinking about Muslim Americans, please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of this group.' This categorical variable was reverse coded so that higher values indicate more unfavorable opinions toward Muslim Americans ($\mu = 2.18$; SD $= 0.91$). The second measure concerns attitudes toward mosque projects. Respondents were asked how strongly they approve or disapprove of a mosque or Islamic cultural center to be built near their neighborhood or in their city. Mosque opposition is also a categorical variable where value 1 corresponds to strong approval and value 4 indicates strong disapproval ($\mu = 2.16$; SD $= 1.11$).

We account for generalized ethnocentrism by operationalizing two separate measures to capture negative out-group affect not directly related to Muslim Americans. The first pertains to a sense of cultural threat posed by immigrants, which was constructed with responses to the following statement: 'Immigration is changing the culture in the US for the worse.' Respondents who strongly agreed with the statement were assigned value 4, and those who strongly disagreed were assigned value 1 ($\mu = 2.36$; SD $= 1.20$). The second general out-group measure primarily taps into resentment toward African Americans and reads: 'If blacks and other minorities would only try harder, they would be just as well off as whites.' This variable was reverse coded so that the highest value indicates strong agreement with the statement ($\mu = 2.09$; SD $= 1.11$). With these two measures we can examine if there is an additional effect for Islam-related beliefs, or whether these overarching out-group items mitigate the impact of group-specific constructs.

Our Islam-specific variables are rooted in orientalist accounts of the supposed beliefs and intentions (behaviors) of Muslims that are particularly salient in contemporary society. The first measure was operationalized with the following statement, which identifies the mosque, where Islamic teachings take place, as one source of incompatibility and conflict: 'Mosques in the United States discourage Muslims from adopting the American way of life.' This variable was scored from 1 to 4 with the highest value representing strong agreement ($\mu = 2.11$; SD $= 1.07$). The second measure captures the perception that Muslims would prefer to skirt American laws and way of life by instituting and following their own religious codes such as Sharia law. This variable is constructed with the following statement: 'Muslim Americans would rather follow their religious code, or Sharia law, than the Constitution and laws of America.' Respondents who strongly agreed were coded as 4 and those who strongly disagreed were assigned value 1 ($\mu = 2.50$; SD $= 1.15$). Pearson correlation coefficients between the four predictors and the two outcome variables is reported in Appendix Figure A1. The coefficients indicate a fairly moderate, but not strong, correlation (between 0.24 and 0.54) between all of the key measures. As an additional diagnostic, we report the variance inflation factors (VIF) of all the predictors in Table A1. VIF estimates how much the variance of a regression coefficient is inflated due to multicollinearity. A VIF value of 10 or higher is often indicative of consequential collinearity, which researchers are advised to address in the context of several factors (O'brien 2007). In both models, the reported VIF values are considerably below 10 or even more conservative thresholds such as 4, indicating that multicollinearity is not of serious concern.

Assessing our claim also requires that we account for a number of theoretically relevant confounders. Research by Davis and Silver (2004) suggests that the 9/11 terrorist attacks may have led some to form unfavorable opinions toward Muslims. More specifically, the authors find that the greater individuals' sense of threat, the lower their support for extending civil liberties to Muslims. However, Davis (2007)'s examination of panel data later demonstrated that such tendencies were only temporary, reflecting a momentary reaction that subsided with a diminishing sense of threat. Furthermore, Davis finds that citizens were fairly uniform in their negative evaluations of Muslims regardless of the perceived level of threat. The negative disposition toward Muslims was likely already ingrained in the American psyche well before the Al-Qaeda-sponsored terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, we include a categorical measure (1–4) gauging respondents' sense of terror threat with the following question: 'How worried are you that a terrorist attack against the United States might take place in the next few years.' Respondents who reported being extremely worried were assigned the highest value.

In addition to a sense of terror threat, we control for ideology and party identification. Some scholars have argued that conservatives are more likely than liberals to view minority groups negatively (Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo 1996). Others, however, have argued that ideology has little to no impact on attitudes toward out-groups such as African Americans (Sniderman and Piazza 1995). Party identification may also play an influential role in understanding assessments of Muslim Americans since citizens often take cues from political elites who share their political predispositions (Zaller 1992). In the past few years, numerous Republican politicians have explicitly portrayed Muslim Americans in a negative light (Wajahat et al. 2011). As such, Republicans may be more likely than Democrats or independents to express negative sentiments toward Muslim Americans.

Finally, we account for frequency of worship attendance and Evangelical identification in our models because religiosity may be linked to prejudice toward out-groups (Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Hello 2002; Johnson, Rowatt, and LaBouff 2012). We fully recognize that these measures are imperfect as they only tap into the behavioral and identity components of the concept. In fact, research by Shortle and Gaddie (2015) demonstrates that negative and restrictive views of Muslims and their places of worship is more strongly shaped by beliefs (religious nationalism) rather than religious identities or behaviors. Beyond these variables, our models include standard demographic controls for gender (female = 1), age, education, income, race (white = 1), and state of residence (Washington State = 1). Descriptive statistics are reported in Table A3.

Analysis and results

We begin by first examining attitudes toward Muslim Americans. We estimate five ordered probit models regressing the categorical 'Muslim unfavorability' response variable on our key measures and control variables. In models 1–3 in Table 1 we find that both of the general out-group measures and the two Islam-specific indicator are positively associated (at $p < .05$) with unfavorable ratings of Muslim Americans. Models 4 and 5 (in Table 1) further extend the analysis by introducing control variables. However, only model 5 includes both the general out-group measures and the Islam-specific variables. We employ this analytical strategy to illustrate how both the model fit and the magnitude

Table 1. Ordered probit model: predictors of unfavorability toward Muslim Americans.

	Muslim Unfavorability				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Immigrant cultural threat	0.328***		0.195***	0.220***	0.137***
	(0.032)		(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.036)
Black resentment	0.284***		0.196***	0.184***	0.135***
	(0.034)		(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.037)
Sharia law threat		0.389***	0.291***		0.263***
		(0.035)	(0.037)		(0.038)
Mosque cultural threat		0.265***	0.173***		0.142***
		(0.037)	(0.039)		(0.040)
Perceived terror threat				0.039	−0.002
				(0.036)	(0.037)
Worship attendance				0.007	0.009
				(0.023)	(0.023)
High income				0.043	0.055
				(0.102)	(0.103)
Middle income				0.046	0.049
				(0.092)	(0.092)
Not rep. income				0.079	0.085
				(0.127)	(0.128)
Education				−0.117***	−0.110***
				(0.037)	(0.037)
Age				0.009***	0.009***
				(0.002)	(0.002)
Female				0.011	−0.001
				(0.070)	(0.070)
White				0.109	0.087
				(0.100)	(0.101)
Republican				0.142	0.092
				(0.104)	(0.105)
Independent				0.068	0.048
				(0.088)	(0.089)
Ideology (Lib-Con)				0.137***	0.094**
				(0.038)	(0.039)
Born-again				0.127	0.031
				(0.081)	(0.082)
WA state				−0.355***	−0.347***
				(0.075)	(0.076)
Cut 1	0.457***	0.601***	0.984***	0.927***	1.181***
	(0.085)	(0.089)	(0.099)	(0.270)	(0.274)
Cut 2	2.022***	2.198***	2.670***	2.594***	2.940***
	(0.100)	(0.105)	(0.120)	(0.278)	(0.284)
Cut 3	2.802***	2.996***	3.510***	3.407***	3.798***
	(0.112)	(0.117)	(0.134)	(0.283)	(0.290)
N	1103	1103	1103	1103	1103
AIC	2445.435	2407.886	2326.790	2377.160	2296.286
BIC	2470.463	2432.915	2361.831	2472.270	2401.408

Significance Levels: ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$; Two-Tailed Test.

of the key variables differ when comparing the standard 'ethnocentric model' to our 'Islam-specific model.'

To aid in the interpretation of the results, we calculate changes in predicted probabilities (first differences) for each key covariate in models 4 and 5 and graphed those estimated probabilities with 90% confidence bands in Figure 1. First differences were calculated by changing each explanatory variable of interest from minimum to maximum value while holding all the other model covariates at their respective means.

Without the inclusion of Islam-specific variables, we find that individuals who stated that immigration is changing the American culture for the worse are about 9 percentage

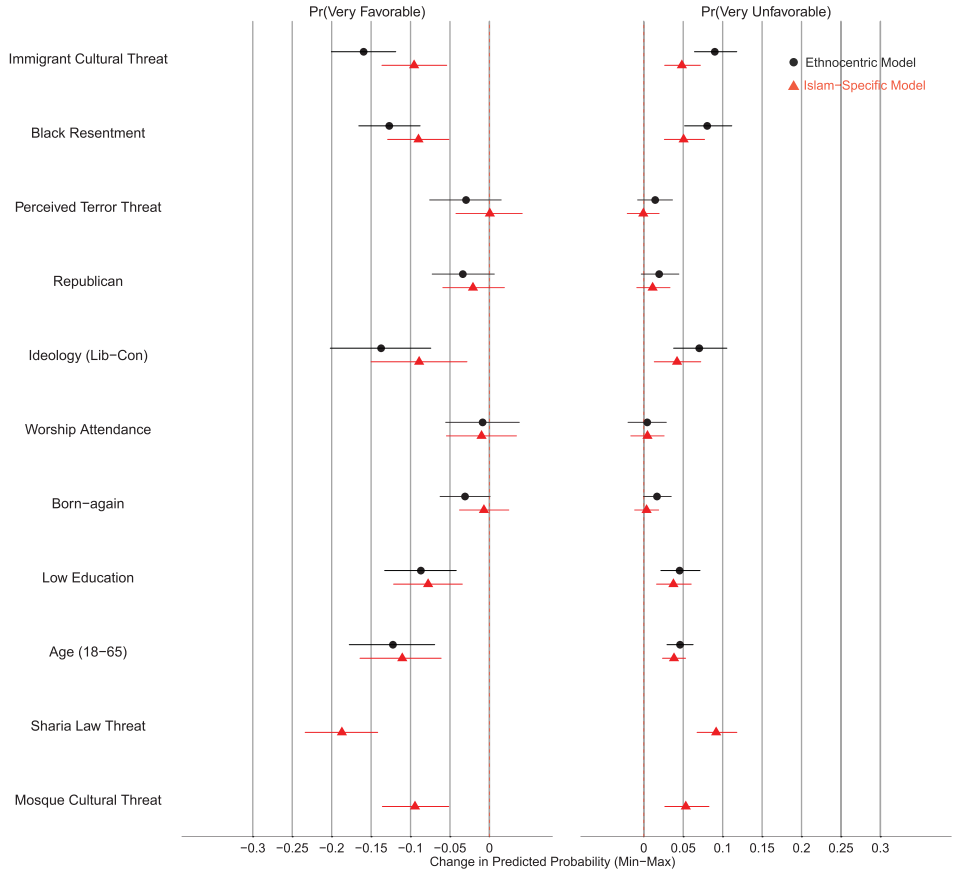

Figure 1. Predictors of anti-Muslim attitudes.

Note: Changes in predicted probabilities with 90% confidence bands were calculated by keeping all the model covariates in Table 1, Models 4 & 5 at their respective means.

points more likely than their counterparts to express a 'very unfavorable' opinion toward Muslim Americans. Likewise, respondents who are more resentful toward African Americans are about 7 percentage points more likely than their counterparts to negatively evaluate American Muslims. At the other end of the spectrum, the immigrant cultural threat variable decreased the likelihood of holding a 'very favorable' opinion toward American Muslim by 17 percentage points. The Black resentment variable has a similar impact – a decrease of 13 percentage points.

With the inclusion of the Islam-specific measures in model 5, the impact of both the immigrant cultural threat and Black resentment on the response variable decreases in magnitude. For instance, in the 'Islam-Specific Model,' immigrant cultural threat only reduces the probability of holding a very unfavorable opinion of Muslim Americans by 5 percentage points compared to 9 percentage points in the ethnocentric only model. The impact of racial resentment on anti-Muslim attitudes also declines in the Islam-specific model.

Turning to our key measures, we find that both the Sharia law and mosque cultural threat variables are strongly associated with assessments of American Muslims.

Individuals who believe Muslim Americans would rather follow Sharia law rather than the Constitution and laws of the US are 9 percentage points more likely than their counterparts to hold a very unfavorable opinion of Muslim Americans, and are 19 percentage points less likely to indicate that they hold a very favorable attitude. Individuals who perceive mosques in the US are discouraging Muslims from adopting the American way of life are 5 percentage points more likely than their counterparts to hold a very unfavorable opinion, and 9 percentage points less likely to hold a very favorable opinion.

When examining the effect of all the covariates in the Islam-specific model, we observe that the Sharia law variable exerted a substantively bigger influence on anti-Muslim attitudes than either one of the generalized ethnocentric variables. Additionally, a comparison of model fit statistics at the bottom of Table 1 provides strong evidence for selecting the Islam-specific model in favor of the general ethnocentric model. After accounting for both the mosque and Sharia variables in model 5, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), which provides a method for assessing the quality of related models, substantially decreases – a difference of 81 points. The Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), which penalizes the number of additional parameters much more strongly than AIC and allows for a comparison of non-nested models, also suggests that selecting the content-specific model over the generalized ethnocentric model is preferable – a difference of 71 points. According to Raftery (1995), a BIC difference of plus ten provides very strong evidence for adopting, in this case, the Islam-specific model. Overall then, the results support the contention that orientalist notions of Islam help explain negative assessments of Muslim Americans *above and beyond* generalized ethnocentric measures.

In addition to the main findings, we find that age, education, and political ideology are also statistically associated with Muslim American unavailability. Perhaps not surprisingly, older and less educated individuals are more likely than their younger and more educated counterparts to harbor negative sentiments toward Muslim Americans. As for ideology, self-identified conservative respondents are 4 percentage points more likely than self-identified liberals to view Muslim Americans very unfavorably – or, on the other end of the spectrum, 9 percentage points less likely to view Muslims very favorably. Outside of these indicators, we note that residents of Washington state were more likely than individuals residing in North Carolina and Arkansas to view Muslim Americans favorably. This finding is not surprising given Washington's liberal electorate.

Besides the aforementioned findings, we did not find any other statistically significant relationships. Of note, perceived terrorism threat was not associated with anti-Muslim attitudes. This finding is in line with Davis (2007)'s assessment that citizens hold fairly uniform negative attitudes toward Muslims regardless of a perceived sense of terror threat. We also do not find that born-again evangelicals are more or less likely than their counterparts to negatively evaluate Muslim Americans.

We now move to the second outcome variable: opposition toward mosque projects. We previously discussed how political officials and members of the public used orientalist frames to generate community-level opposition toward various mosques or Islamic centers. The arguments often distinctly focused on the long-standing misconception that mosques deter Muslims from adopting American ethos and values, with Sharia law serving as a major threat to American democracy. To examine the extent to which such content-specific beliefs, beyond generalized ethnocentrism, are uniquely related to mosque opposition, we estimated five ordered probit models. The results reported in

Table 2 support our central argument. For ease of interpretation, we display first differences obtained from models 4 and 5 in Figure 2.

Taking a look at the ethnocentric only model, immigrant cultural threat has the biggest substantive influence on opposition toward mosque projects. Individuals concerned about immigration changing the culture of the US for the worse are 19 percentage points more likely than their counterparts to disapprove of mosque projects in their city or neighborhood. In comparison, ideology increased the probability of opposition by 15 percentage points, with the effect size for Black resentment considerably smaller – 8 percentage points.

After introducing the content-specific measures, we find that the effect of immigrant cultural threat declines by 5 percentage points. We observe the same trend with respect to the Black resentment measure. The results further illustrate that both mosque and sharia cultural threat are significantly and positively associated with restrictive views toward mosque projects; strongly believing that mosques generally discourage Muslims from adopting the American way of life increases the probability of strongly opposing mosque or Islamic center projects by 17 percentage points, or decreases the probability

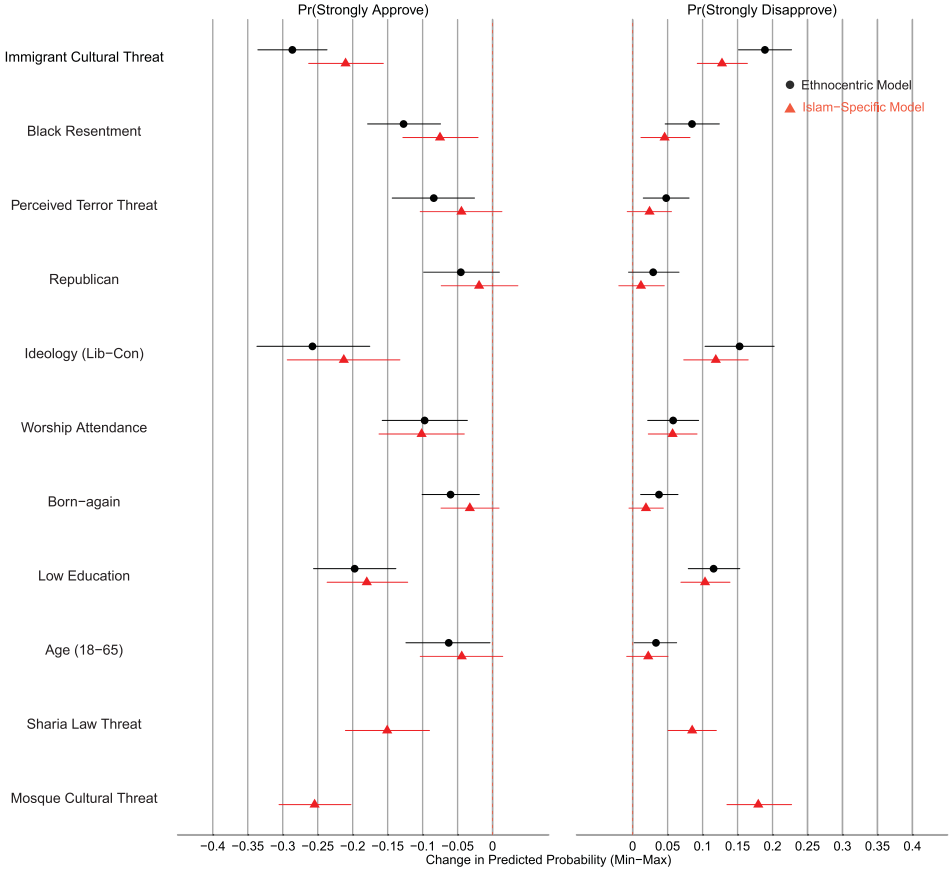

Figure 2. Predictors of opposition toward mosque project.

Note: Changes in predicted probabilities with 90% confidence bands were calculated by keeping all the model covariates in Table 2, Models 4 & 5 at their respective means.

of strongly approving mosques by 25 percentage points. Sharia law threat also increased the odds of mosque disapproval, but only by 8 percentage points.

In addition to the main results, we find that conservatives respondents, frequent worship attenders, and those with lower levels of education are more likely than their counterparts to oppose mosques being built in their city or neighborhood. Once again, we do not find a sense of terror threat and born-again status to have a statistically significant impact on the outcome variable. With the inclusion of our content-specific measures, both of the aforementioned variables lose statistical significance.

Finally, model fit statistics once again suggest endorsing the Islam-specific model over the general ethnocentric model. Both AIC and BIC scores are substantially smaller in the aforementioned model. We also note that our findings are robust to alternative modeling strategies. Table A1 demonstrates that our main results do not change when employing Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. Table A2 shows that combining the two out-group measures and the two Islam-specific measures does not alter our main conclusions. Overall, our results demonstrate that group-specific measures help explain negative sentiments toward Muslim Americans and restrictive views toward mosque projects above and beyond more generalized out-group measures.

Additional evidence

So far the analysis has supported our central argument regarding the independent impact of Islam-specific beliefs on Muslim American unfavorability and opposition to mosque projects. However, it could be argued that generalized ethnocentrism may still sit at the root of the content-specific measures. That is, respondents who feel threatened by immigrants more generally or who hold racially resentful attitudes are also likely to adopt orientalist notions of Islam and, in turn, express negative sentiments toward Muslim Americans. While this certainly may be the case for some individuals, we do not think it is the predominant explanation given that the general out-group indicators did not absorb the effects of our content-specific variables in Tables 1 and 2.

Nonetheless, another way to examine this possibility is with a path or mediation analysis.[9] If evidence of strong mediational effect is present, our argument is weakened. Table 3 reports the results of a set of Muslim unfavorability mediation models, which we estimated using Imai, Keele, and Yamamoto (2010)'s 'Mediation' R package.[10] All of the mediation models include the same set of control variables in our previous analyses. Since we use observational data, we cannot draw any causal inferences. But, as some have noted, mediation is often an elaborate methodology for testing correlational hypotheses (Fiedler, Schott, and Meiser 2011). Thus, the results from the mediation analyses provide only suggestive evidence regarding the theorized relationship between general out-group antipathy, Islam-specific beliefs, and anti-Muslim attitudes. ADE (average direct effect) refers to the direct impact of X (e.g. immigrant cultural threat) on outcome variable Y (Muslim unfavorability). AME refers to the average mediated effect, which is used to calculate the estimated proportion of the total effect that is mediated by variable M (e.g. sharia threat).

The results suggest that the relationship between the general out-group measures and anti-Muslim sentiments are not strongly mediated by the Islam-specific variables. Column 1 suggests the presence of partial mediation, but this effect is relatively small as only 19.6

Table 2. Ordered probit model: predictors of Mosque project approval.

	Mosque project (approve–disapprove)				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Immigrant cultural threat	0.434***		0.298***	0.295***	0.217***
	(0.030)		(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.035)
Black resentment	0.249***		0.156***	0.131***	0.078**
	(0.032)		(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Sharia law threat		0.331***	0.205***		0.152***
		(0.033)	(0.035)		(0.036)
Mosques cultural threat		0.404***	0.308***		0.279***
		(0.035)	(0.037)		(0.038)
Perceived terror threat				0.082**	0.043
				(0.035)	(0.035)
Worship attendance				0.057***	0.061***
				(0.022)	(0.022)
High income				−0.093	−0.071
				(0.097)	(0.098)
Middle income				−0.256***	−0.252***
				(0.088)	(0.089)
Not rep. income				−0.063	−0.060
				(0.120)	(0.121)
Education				−0.195***	−0.182***
				(0.036)	(0.036)
Age				0.004*	0.003
				(0.002)	(0.002)
Female				−0.080	−0.109
				(0.067)	(0.068)
White				−0.161*	−0.200**
				(0.095)	(0.095)
Republican				0.138	0.060
				(0.101)	(0.102)
Independent				0.046	0.004
				(0.086)	(0.087)
Ideology (Lib-Con)				0.192***	0.160***
				(0.037)	(0.037)
Born-again				0.182**	0.099
				(0.076)	(0.078)
WA state				−0.438***	−0.423***
				(0.073)	(0.074)
Cut 1	1.028***	1.174***	1.637***	0.546**	0.811***
	(0.083)	(0.089)	(0.100)	(0.255)	(0.259)
Cut 2	2.152***	2.304***	2.856***	1.817***	2.151***
	(0.094)	(0.099)	(0.114)	(0.258)	(0.264)
Cut 3	2.574***	2.729***	3.312***	2.287***	2.645***
	(0.099)	(0.104)	(0.120)	(0.260)	(0.266)
N	1267	1267	1267	1267	1267
AIC	2890.159	2868.175	2737.403	2701.913	2605.116
BIC	2915.881	2893.898	2773.413	2799.656	2713.149

Significance Levels: ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$; Two-Tailed Test.

Table 3. Muslim unfavorability mediation results.

	(1) X = Immigrant M = Sharia	(2) X = Black Resent M = Sharia	(3) X = Immigrant M = Mosque	(4) X = Black Resent M = Mosque
AME	0.02351	0.01279	0.00896	0.00736
ADE	0.09458	0.10486	0.08879	0.10145
Total Effect	0.11809	0.11765	0.09774	0.10881
Prop. Mediated	19.6%	10.7%	8.8%	–
Prop. Mediated CI	(8.0, 39.9)	(1.1, 25.4)	(1.0, 26.2)	–
	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$	n.s.

Table 4. Mosque opposition mediation results.

	(1) X = Immigrant M = Sharia	(2) X = Black Resent M = Sharia	(3) X = Immigrant M = Mosque	(4) X = Black Resent M = Mosque
AME	0.01131	0.00525	0.01521	0.00945
ADE	0.11792	0.02595	0.12241	0.02687
Total Effect	0.12923	0.03120	0.13762	0.03632
Prop. Mediated	8.6%	–	11.9%	–
Prop. Mediated CI	(1.6, 18.9)	–	(3.2, 22.8)	–
	$p < 0.05$	n.s.	$p < 0.01$	n.s.

percent of the total effect between immigrant cultural threat and Muslim unfavorability is mediated by Sharia law threat. Stated differently, 80 percent of the total effect is *not* mediated. We find negligible effects in columns 2 and 3 – an estimated 9 to 11 percent of the total effect is mediated. Finally, column 4 demonstrates that racial resentment is not statistically mediated by beliefs toward the role of mosques in American society.

Table 4 presents the mediation results of outcome variable mosque opposition. Columns 2 and 4 indicate that the impact of racial resentment on restrictive views toward mosque projects is not mediated by either one of our content-specific measures. Columns 1 and 2 suggest the presence of negligible mediation effects. That is, only 9 to 12 percent of the total effect between immigrant cultural threat and mosque opposition is traveling through Islam-specific beliefs.

Taken together, the findings do not provide strong evidence in support of the claim that at the root of orientalist misconceptions about Islam sits a generalized sense of ethnocentrism. At best, the findings suggest some level of overlap between different outgroup measures, which we do not dispute. The key takeaway point is that measures of generalized ethnocentrism can only go so far in explaining attitudes toward Muslim Americans.

Framing experiment

While the observational data analyses have demonstrated a clear connection between orientalist notions of Islam and prejudice toward Muslim Americans, we cannot rule out the issue of endogeneity. One could argue that some citizens hold preexisting negative attitudes toward American Muslims and then adopt and express content-specific beliefs rather than vice versa. While our theoretical priors are quite strong in that they are well-grounded in the long-standing discourse of orientalism, we have not been able to demonstrate that Islam-specific beliefs, for example, are driving the type of mosque opposition the US has witnessed over the last couple of decades.

To address this limitation, we embedded a framing experiment in a representative survey of 782 registered voters in Washington state. The survey was administered from 1 to 6 October 2012 by telephone with live callers based on randomly selected phone numbers (both landline and cell phone) made available by publicly available and verified lists of registered voters. The survey experiment included a negative frame about the influence of mosques on Muslim Americans, a positive frame, and a control condition with no frame whatsoever. All the subjected were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental conditions.

If our theoretical priors are not strong, priming subjects with negative information about mosques should not have an impact on approval or disapproval of mosque projects in the respondents' city or town. However, if we can experimentally activate orientalist tropes of mosques and subjects decide to then oppose mosques in their city, all other things being equal through random assignment, we could more confidently conclude that content-specific considerations are driving the relationship and not vice versa.

Subjects in the negative frame were given the following prompt: 'Recently a study by the US Department of Justice found Muslim Americans who attend the mosque are actually less likely to adopt the American way of life, and more likely to prefer to see their religious code, called Sharia Law, used to settle disputes.' This frame is closely related to our three-state survey questions, which tapped into anxieties surrounding the mosque and Sharia law. We selected the Department of Justice (DOJ) as the source of the hypothetical study given that it is not partisan in nature and is a relatively recognizable and credible source of information.

As part of an exploratory analysis, we also test if information that counters common orientalist misconceptions of Muslim Americans can shift opinions in a favorable direction. As such, subjects in the positive condition were exposed to the opposite frame: 'Recently a study by the US Department of Justice found Muslim Americans who attend the mosque are actually more likely to adopt the American way of life, and less likely to prefer to see their religious code, called Sharia Law, used to settle disputes.' Finally, a third group was randomly assigned to receive no frame at all, which served as the control group.

After the experiment, respondents were asked whether they would favor or oppose mosques to be built in their city – the same type of question used in our three-state study. Specifically, the following prompt was given: 'We should allow Islamic cultural centers, or mosques, to be built here in our city.' All the subjects were given the option of strongly agreeing to strongly disagreeing with the preceding statement. Given that our treatments involved deception (fabricated DOJ study), subjects in both treatment conditions were debriefed at the end of the survey. Each respondent was informed about the purpose of the study and told that the DOJ study was fictional.

Across our entire sample (see Figure 3), we find that priming subjects with negative information about mosques led to a 15-point drop in the respondents' willingness to accept mosques in their communities. That is, about 55 percent of individuals in the control group indicated that they would support a potential mosque project, but only 40 percent expressed the same opinion in the negative frame condition in which common misperceptions about Muslim Americans were primed. This difference is statistically significant at $p < 0.5$. Priming subjects with positive information, however, did not seem to have a statistically positive effect on attitudes toward mosques. This is likely because those who strongly oppose mosques are unlikely to change their attitudes with one contrasting information. Previous attempts to provide information designed to counter misperceptions about issues ranging from immigration, poverty rates, and the racial composition of the US has demonstrated that such information had minimal or no effects on attitudes toward relevant public policies (Lawrence and Sides 2014; Hopkins, Sides, and Citrin 2018).

While the experimental results demonstrate that the activation of orientalist tropes can decrease levels of mosque support, one concern with the findings is that the sample of

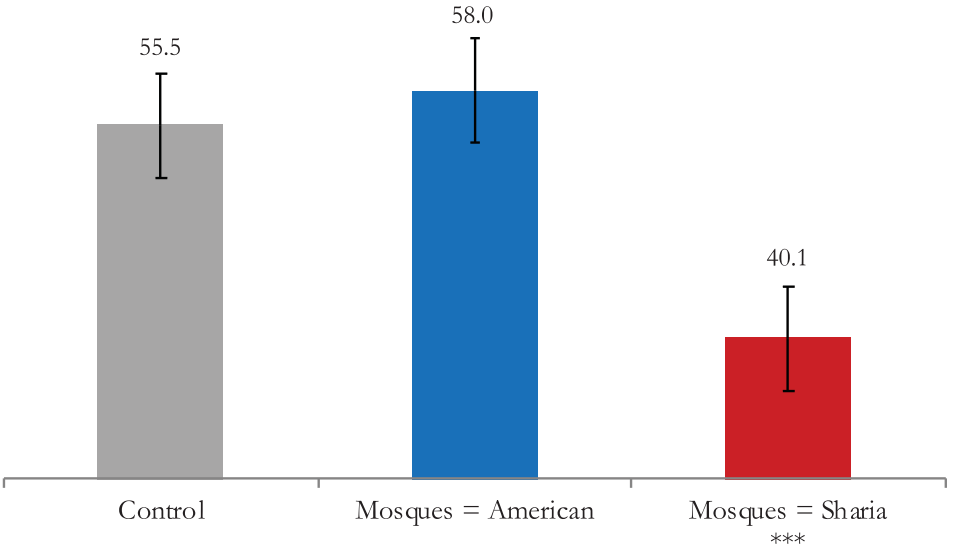

Figure 3. Percent who strongly agree mosques should be allowed in their city/neighborhood.

Note: Results based on 731 completed responses (Control = 233; American Treatment = 256; Sharia Treatment = 242). Estimates were obtained using the original sample weights provided by the Washington Poll. Unweighted results do not alter one's substantive conclusions regarding the statistically different estimates between the control and the negative treatment group (Control = 55.4%, American frame = 52%, Sharia frame = 43.8%).

Washington state residents is not reflective of the overall American public, given the strong liberal streak in the Puget Sound region of the state.[11] Indeed, the control group in the statewide sample has a seemingly high acceptance of mosques. Analysis of our three-state survey data also suggested that Washingtonians are much more tolerant of Muslim Americans than those residing in North Carolina or Arkansas. To address this concern, we excluded respondents in the Puget Sound region (the liberal part of the state) and found that the negative frame about mosques had the hypothesized effect. As Figure 4 demonstrates, the difference between the control condition and the negative treatment is a statistically significant 15 percentage points. While more data needs to be collected to further tease out these differences, our findings are fairly robust even when Puget Sound is excluded from the analysis. Lastly, we note that respondents in the positive condition reported more support for mosque as compared to the control condition, but this finding does not meet traditional levels of statistical significance. As such, we cannot conclude that one-shot positive frames are necessarily effective in engendering support for mosque projects.

Conclusion and discussion

This study contributes to public opinion research by providing a new theoretical perspective on prejudice toward Muslim Americans. We made the case that content-specific measures are valuable because citizens adopt fairly nuanced beliefs about different groups. Drawing insights from the discourse of orientalism, we developed and examined two new Islam-specific measures. In doing so, we demonstrate that negative affect of cultural (immigrants) and racial (Black Americans) out-groups can only go so far in

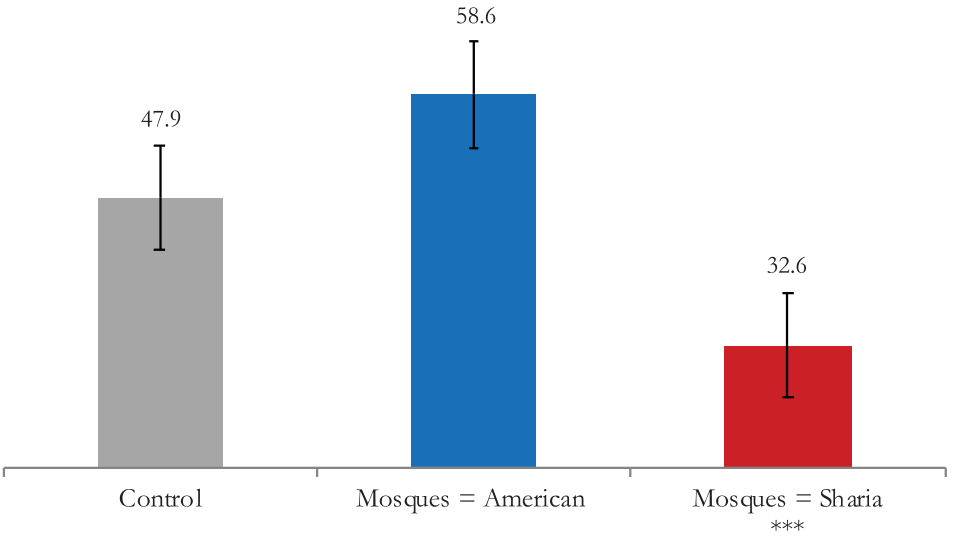

Figure 4. Percent who strongly agree mosques should be allowed in their city/neighborhood (Puget Sound excluded).

Note: Results based on 299 completed responses (Control = 99; American Treatment = 108; Sharia Treatment = 92). Estimates were obtained using the original sample weights provided by the Washington Poll. Unweighted results do not alter one's substantive conclusions regarding the statistically different estimates between the control and the negative treatment group (Control = 47.5%, American frame = 51.9%, Sharia frame = 38.0%).

explaining antipathy toward Muslim Americans and restrictive positions toward American mosques. While some people similarly dislike all out-groups and may consider Muslims as a 'band of others,' ethnocentric only accounts are simply too broad.

Paying attention to the ways in which Muslim Americans are vilified in contemporary politics indicates the presence of a specific type of discourse that is fairly distinct from anti-black resentment or general anxieties over immigration. Grassroots organizations such as ACT for America, which have provided model legislation for anti-Sharia law bills across the country, have relied on well-know orientalist frames to generate support for their anti-Muslim agenda. In June 2017, ACT for America organized a 'March against Sharia' in 28 cities to 'protect' women and children from the perceived infiltration of US institutions by Muslims, who supposedly wish to replace American laws with Sharia. Representatives of this group, which claim to have 750,000 members nationwide, have further argued that any new mosque construction should be reported to the FBI, explicitly linking American mosques to radicalism. Some may consider organizations such as ACT as too extreme to exert any influence. Our study suggests that this may not be the case as the same type of Islam-specific frame propagated by such groups is powerfully linked to anti-Muslim sentiments and opposition toward mosque projects among citizens.

Since our initial data collection efforts, some scholars have recognized the need for the development and assessment of more group-specific measures. For instance, Lajevardi (2017) has developed a new Muslim American hostility scale, which has been shown to powerfully predict support toward President Trump (Lajevardi and Abrajano 2018) and policies intended to marginalize Muslims (Lajevardi and Oskooii 2018). We believe these efforts are important and likely to attract more scholarly attention for at least three reasons. First, unrest and war across the Middle East has resulted in increased

migration of Arab and Muslim peoples to the US. A recent study by the Pew Research Center finds that the number of Muslims in the US is on the rise, with Islam projected to become the second largest religion in America by 2040 (Mohamed 2018). Thus, as this population grows, and interacts more with non-Muslim Americans, scholars will turn their attention toward models of anti-Muslim attitudes. Second, the global War on Terror, and subsequent media portrayal of Arabs and Muslims through an orientalist lens shows no signs of slowing. Even with the US withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan, the events in Libya, Egypt, and Syria means that Muslims will continue to be in the spotlight of American foreign policy, and generally depicted in negative light by the media and political elites. Third, the narrative of an imagined Sharia threat will continue as a storyline in America as witnessed by the spread of state-level anti-Sharia bills. The confluence of these three trends means that American Muslims will continue to be misunderstood, and represents a unique opportunity to better understand the nature of out-group bias and strategies that could effectively counter it.

Finally, the development of content-specific measures allows scholars to assess both the unique and common elements that shape bias toward various groups. Since historical factors can uniquely structure the nature of bias toward different groups, there is substantial value in going beyond general models of intergroup relations. We encourage such endeavors particularly because prior research has yielded fairly mixed results when using racial resentment scales geared toward Black Americans to explain attitudes toward other groups, such as Latinos (Segura and Valenzuela 2010; Newman, Shah, and Collingwood 2018).

Notes

1. In 2002, the FBI reported a 1600% increase in hate crimes over the span of only few months. Nearly a decade later, the FBI reported that the victimization of Muslim Americans is still a concern. Between 2009 and 2010 the FBI reported an additional upsurge in the number of hate crimes, which was reported as the largest increase of hate crimes among any racial, ethnic, or religious group during the one-year span (Uniform Crime Report, 2010). Similar spikes were observed prior to and after the 2016 Presidential election.
2. This study has been quite influential, with close to 200 Google scholar citations since its publication date.
3. Although we use the terms 'Muslim' and 'Muslim American' interchangeably, we are only referring to American Muslims.
4. Said argued that terms such as Middle East, Islam, or Arab, have inaccurately become conflated with one another, leading to profound generalizations of diverse groups of peoples.
5. The center was envisioned to promote cultural and religious harmony through interfaith collaboration, youth and women's empowerment, and arts and cultural initiatives.
6. Geller was unable to provide any evidence to support the assertion that four out of five mosques preach hate and incitement to violence.
7. For more information, please refer to: https://www.aclu.org/issues/national-security/discriminatory-profiling/nationwide-anti-mosque-activity?redirect=map-nationwide-anti-mosque-activity.
8. More details available at: http://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/2011/06/07/american-mosques-jihads-incubators-2/.
9. Social scientists have used mediation analysis with both experimental and non-experimental data to examine whether the effect of some variable X on an outcome Y is explained by some intervening variable M (Shrout and Bolger 2002).

10. For additional information about the methods being implemented by the mediation software refer to Imai et al. (2010).
11. Another potential critique of our experiment is that respondents are simply making rational decisions based on the available information that emphasizes the adverse effects of mosques. That is, the negative frame is capturing rational decision-making rather than activating orientialist tropes. While this may be the case, the positive treatment effects do not support this interpretation. If rational decision-making is truly at work, we would expect to find that positive information can also move individuals to support the construction of mosques. However, this is not the case. Thus, we conclude that the reason the negative treatment is effective in engendering opposition is because it activates underlying orientalist sentiments of Muslims.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix

Table A1. OLS regression models.

	Muslim unfavorability	VIF	Mosque opposition	VIF
Immigrant cultural threat	0.089***	1.67	0.159***	1.67
	(0.024)		(0.026)	
Black resentment	0.096***	1.45	0.056**	1.42
	(0.024)		(0.025)	
Sharia law threat	0.169***	1.69	0.101***	1.65
	(0.025)		(0.026)	
Mosques cultural threat	0.101***	1.59	0.209***	1.55
	(0.026)		(0.027)	
Perceived terror threat	−0.003	1.23	0.036	1.22
	(0.024)		(0.025)	
Worship attendance	0.004	1.31	0.042***	1.31
	(0.015)		(0.016)	
High income	0.029	1.89	−0.090	1.91
	(0.067)		(0.071)	
Middle income	0.030	1.70	−0.210***	1.68
	(0.060)		(0.065)	
Not rep. income	0.064	1.35	−0.033	1.36
	(0.084)		(0.088)	
Education	−0.067***	1.36	−0.135***	1.36
	(0.024)		(0.026)	
Age	0.006***	1.14	0.003*	1.13
	(0.001)		(0.002)	
Female	−0.006	1.07	−0.066	1.06
	(0.046)		(0.049)	
White	0.052	1.09	−0.131*	1.09
	(0.065)		(0.070)	
Republican	0.060	1.98	0.045	2.02
	(0.069)		(0.074)	
Independent	0.025	1.51	−0.014	1.55
	(0.057)		(0.062)	
Ideology (Lib-Con)	0.055**	1.83	0.103***	1.79
	(0.025)		(0.027)	
Born-again	0.028	1.41	0.098*	1.39
	(0.054)		(0.057)	
WA state	−0.193***	1.22	−0.269***	1.23
	(0.050)		(0.053)	
Constant	0.734***		1.113***	
	(0.178)		(0.190)	
N	1103		1267	
R-squared	0.348		0.432	
Adj. *R*-squared	0.337		0.424	
Residual std. error	0.735 (df = 1084)		0.837 (df = 1248)	
F-statistic	32.182*** (df = 18; 1084)		52.798*** (df = 18; 1248)	

Notes: Significance levels: *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$; Two-tailed test; VIF: variance inflation factor.

Table A2. Additive measures (ordered probit models).

	Muslim unfavorability	Mosque project opposition
Generalized ethnocentrism	0.136***	0.146***
	(0.023)	(0.022)
Islam-specific beliefs	0.204***	0.217***
	(0.023)	(0.022)
Perceived terror threat	0.002	0.049
	(0.036)	(0.035)
Worship attendance	0.008	0.062***
	(0.023)	(0.022)
High income	0.054	−0.079
	(0.103)	(0.098)
Middle income	0.045	−0.261***
	(0.092)	(0.089)
Not rep. income	0.080	−0.062
	(0.127)	(0.121)
Education	−0.109***	−0.187***
	(0.037)	(0.036)
Age	0.009***	0.003
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female	−0.001	−0.111
	(0.070)	(0.068)
White	0.087	−0.187**
	(0.100)	(0.095)
Republican	0.087	0.062
	(0.105)	(0.102)
Independent	0.043	0.002
	(0.089)	(0.087)
Ideology (Lib-Con)	0.093**	0.157***
	(0.039)	(0.037)
Born-again	0.034	0.100
	(0.082)	(0.077)
WA state	−0.348***	−0.405***
	(0.076)	(0.073)
Cut 1	1.173***	0.841***
	(0.273)	(0.259)
Cut 2	2.925***	2.173***
	(0.283)	(0.263)
Cut 3	3.783***	2.664***
	(0.290)	(0.266)
N	1103	1267
AIC	2445.435	2612.099
BIC	2470.463	2709.843

Notes: Significance levels: *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$; Two-tailed test.

Table A3. Descriptive statistics.

	Mean	Median	S.D.	Min	Max
Muslim unfavorability	2.18	2.00	0.91	1.00	4.00
Mosque opposition	2.16	2.00	1.11	1.00	4.00
Immigrant cultural threat	2.36	2.00	1.20	1.00	4.00
Black resentment	2.09	2.00	1.11	1.00	4.00
Sharia law threat	2.50	2.00	1.15	1.00	4.00
Mosque cultural threat	2.11	2.00	1.07	1.00	4.00
Terror threat	2.82	3.00	1.03	1.00	4.00
Worship attendance	3.61	4.00	1.70	1.00	6.00
High income	0.30	0.00	0.46	0.00	1.00
Middle income	0.35	0.00	0.48	0.00	1.00
Low income	0.25	0.00	0.43	0.00	1.00
Missing income	0.11	0.00	0.31	0.00	1.00
Education	2.52	2.00	1.05	1.00	4.00
Age	55.04	56.00	15.99	18.00	92.00
Female	1.48	1.00	0.50	1.00	2.00
White	1.85	2.00	0.35	1.00	2.00
Republican	0.28	0.00	0.45	0.00	1.00
Democrat	0.38	0.00	0.49	0.00	1.00
Independent	0.33	0.00	0.47	0.00	1.00
Ideology (Lib-Cons)	3.07	3.00	1.19	1.00	5.00
Born-again	0.39	0.00	0.49	0.00	1.00
WA	0.42	0.00	0.49	0.00	1.00
ARK	0.32	0.00	0.47	0.00	1.00
NC	0.26	0.00	0.44	0.00	1.00

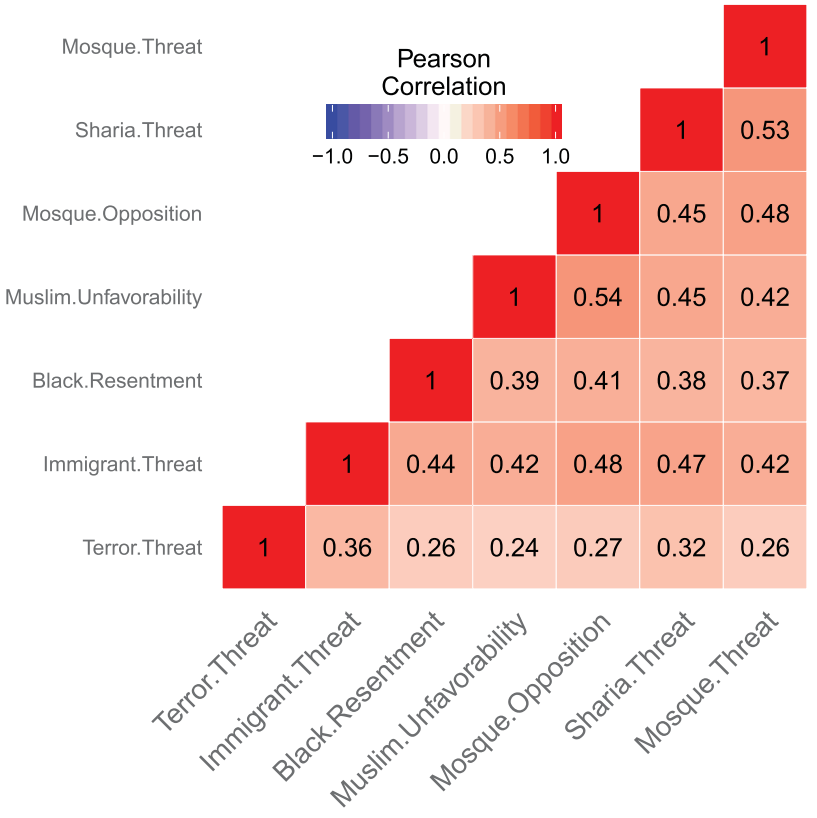

Figure A1. Pearson correlation matrix.