Muslim Americans are at a political crossroads. On the one hand, many Muslims possess the economic and educational resources to realize the American dream. And, importantly, there is evidence that Muslims are coalescing into a voting bloc of consequence in some areas of the country where they constitute significant portions of the population (see Martin 2009). On the other hand, social and political pressures might keep the dream out of reach for American Muslims, particularly if anti-Muslim policies, attitudes, and rhetoric continue to gain momentum. Since the attacks on September 11, 2001, American politics has treated Muslims as singular. But is this appropriate? Do the social, political, economic, and gendered realities of Muslim life in America effectively sustain a pan-ethnic identity in the post-9/11 era, or do differences manifest despite the scrutiny directed at Muslims in contemporary America? To answer these questions, we need a social science of Muslims that recognizes their quotidian integration into American public life, just like other Americans. In developing this new area of research, we may also generate and test core social science theories in the context of this critical group. Our volume provides advancements on both fronts.

Both before and after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Muslims have been routinely the subjects of numerous scholarly assessments intended to bring clarity to the social, religious, and political dynamics that this diverse religious community faces. In some cases, scholars have succeeded in fitting pieces of the empirical puzzles surrounding American Muslims together. In many other cases, however, initial analytical attempts have left interested
observers uninterested; with many academic gatekeepers questioning the relevance of the American Muslim public in American politics. Yet it is apparent to any passive observer of American politics that Muslims are central. The time is therefore ripe for scholarship that unpacks the political experiences of American Muslims in the twenty-first century.

In fact, the trends that we assess in this volume have been years in the making. Muslim Americans have become increasingly “racialized” since 9/11, with external markers of dress, skin color, accent, and language functioning as heuristics for a religion constructed as a threat to American culture and national security (Jamal 2009; Selod 2015). This racialization process, however, did not develop in a vacuum. Considerable evidence demonstrates that Muslims have historically been linked to stereotypes of violence, intolerance, and extremism (Esposito 1999; Khan and Ecklund 2013; Said 1979; Shaheen 2003), and that the 9/11 attacks and subsequent events played an important role in shaping Americans’ perceptions of Muslims (Dana et al. 2018).

Non-Muslims can fall into the trap of perceiving Muslims as a uniform collective or as part of a panethnic group. But this volume seeks to unpack the great deal of diversity in the socialization experiences of Muslim Americans (see Jackson 2005). Muslims in the United States vary in their national origin, languages spoken, religiosity, socioeconomic status, and partisanship. But these differences are accompanied by the reality that a subsuming Muslim identity in America has taken root, owing as much to the social identity pressures that Muslims deal with regularly as to the nature of Islamic teaching as a transcendent force (Haddad and Esposito 1998; Khan 1998). In fact, Muslims often appear unwilling to endorse differentiation along intrareligious and nationalistic lines, perhaps reflecting elements of a panethnic identity formation post-9/11 or reflecting the concept of ummah—the collective community of Muslims (see Project MAPS and Zogby International 2004; Barreto et al. 2007). This is not to say that subgroup identities are not important or recognized by Muslims, but aggregating up along the racialized lines as Amaney Jamal (2005b) recommends (i.e., focusing on South Asian, Arab, and African American Muslims) is a good idea. Finally, and in looking for links between Muslim religiosity and political behavior, Ba-Yunus and Kone (2004) remind us that, as with many Christians, there is variation (not uniformity) in Muslim religiosity (see also Barreto and Bozonenlos 2009). Taking a cue from previous scholarship, our contributors focus on the inherent heterogeneities among the American Muslim population when exploring their political behavior.

The study of Muslims in American politics is often punctuated by events that continue to shape the public discourse and perceptions about the group.
The barbaric and well-publicized actions of ISIS militants in Syria and Iraq, isolated events such as the 2010 Fort Hood shooting, and the continued (and erroneous) perception articulated by some critics that U.S. Muslims have not gone on record often enough to denounce brutality waged in the name of their faith continually undermine how the public perceives Muslims. Events involving Muslims and Islam, which are often sensationalized by news media coverage, have offered scholars opportunities to produce studies on Muslim life in America that take several of these events as starting points for inquiry. But this kind of episodic approach to understanding Muslims has significant limitations. This may be due to the discipline’s focus on advancing theoretically driven insights into phenomena rather than responding to each event in a more inductive manner.

While the episodic approach has served some scholars well, our reading of the extant social science literature on Muslim Americans is that it has reached a point where new insights into Muslim experiences can be achieved by coupling existing insights from the literature with new ideas for future empirical assessment through advances in research design, data collection, and the extension of existing questions and theories. In light of the period after 9/11 and especially now during the Trump presidency, it is especially crucial for scholars to think deeply about testing how existing social science theories pertain to Muslim Americans. How do they resemble other marginalized groups? Are their experiences distinct? Does their basis as a religious group allow conflict with their increasing racialization?

Our reading of the literature suggests several existing themes. The first is that Muslims in America are scrutinized by out-group non-Muslims because of their faith and the assumptions that many in government and the general public make about Islam and extremism. The second is that Muslims represent a diverse collection of ethnic, racial, national, and religious subgroups that have been packaged into a panethnic Muslim identity in the years since 9/11, in many instances, without their consent. Third, and most importantly, the literature contains a collection of findings about Muslim political beliefs and behavior that show them to hold a mix of political views, to both broach and shy away from political activity at various times, and to adopt many democratic norms, including tolerance of political and religious difference. But the literature has not yet congealed to predict with much certainty just how Muslims will behave as an identity group in American politics. While we have some insights from the literature discussed below, scholars are still in the beginning stages of identifying the types of questions they should ask about Muslims and the appropriate theoretical lenses to apply.

Our goal with this volume is to offer an update and reappraisal of what we know about Muslims in American political life and what we have yet to
learn. In so doing, our contributors highlight topical areas of theoretical interest regarding Muslim identity, ethnic and racial diversity, relations with law enforcement, political attitudes and participation, and even reactions to commonly used survey measures of Muslim Americans. Of course, an understandable response might simply be to suggest that scholars get busy with extending their research agendas on American Muslims using similar methods used to study other marginalized groups. Another question, for instance, is whether U.S. Muslims are racialized. Some scholarship argues yes (see Dana et al. 2018; Lajevardi and Oskooii 2018; Jamal 2009; Selod 2015) and conducts its analysis through this lens; though more empirical evidence is required to test this claim. Yet part of the difficulty in conducting research on Muslim Americans is that it can be hard to collect data and isolate evidence of direct causality between outcomes and potential antecedents. The contributors then assess how the insights offered in their chapters fit into advancing the agenda of what is known (and what can be better understood) about Muslim Americans. The chapter topics represent a cross-section of the “state of the art” in quantitative research on American Muslims at present. In this way, the chapters serve as vignettes of what we know, do not know, and what we should learn to appropriately assess Muslim Americans and their political futures.

At the same time, and though not a book on analytical methods per se, we present diverse ideas and methodological approaches in research design as a way to illustrate how progress in studying Muslim Americans to this point might be extended. The good news is that we are not beginning from scratch with this effort. As we describe below, the Muslim American politics literature benefits from a decades-long tradition of scholarly inquiry—research that helped establish understanding basic questions surrounding Muslim experiences in the United States; particularly community building, identity, and gender-based experiences. But these studies are predominantly qualitative, which makes replication of their findings difficult. Pew (2007, 2011) and Gallup (2009, 2011) have released omnibus quantitative surveys of the U.S. Muslim population, but the observational data collected in those surveys are not suited for testing direct causal hypotheses. The same is true for the various studies conducted on behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (2006; see also Bagby, Perl, and Froehle 2001). To be sure, these data can be used to advance avenues of inquiry not yet fully developed, which several chapters in this volume do. Importantly, some scholars have combined the use of randomized experiments in surveys of Muslim communities to gain leverage on casual mechanisms in large-\(N\) studies (see Djupe and Calfano 2013; Suhay, Calfano, and Dawe 2015; Calfano 2018), which can serve as a template for future research.
Contributors to this volume first came together at two Muslim American Workshops. With support from the National Science Foundation, we brought together scholars from across the country for two conferences in December 2016 and December 2017 to discuss the state of political science scholarship on Muslim American political attitudes and behavior, and how we might work together to generate and share more such scholarly work. Below and in the following chapters, we detail the scholarly gaps workshop participants identified and present their scholarship filling those gaps. The topics addressed are items that these scholars—many of whom have pioneered the study of Muslim American politics with some of the most persuasive empirical publications about Muslim Americans—identify as key starting points in honing the overall investigation of political puzzles relating to Muslim politics. Our aim is to link the methodologies, findings, and insights from the volume chapters to current realities of American politics, including some lingering thoughts about the effects from the Trump administration. We conclude with a set of suggestions on how to foster increased scholarly attention to overarching questions about this now perennially relevant group in American society.

Muslims and American Politics before and after 9/11

Understanding the current realities Muslims in America face means putting past experiences in the proper context. One of the most common misconceptions of Muslims in America is that their arrival to the nation is relatively recent. In reality, the origins of Muslim life in North America can be traced to the period before British settlers arrived in the early seventeenth century and to American slavery. It is, therefore, unsurprising that dozens of scholarly assessments of Muslims—including political realities confronting this group—stretch back decades, including well-received volumes from Yvonne Haddad (1991) and Jane Smith (1999). This work has done much to shape the literature on Muslim political experiences in America. In some ways, both Haddad and Smith presaged the dominant scholarly focus on topics regarding Islamic political thought, the role of Muslims in their local communities, the experiences of Muslims in different racial and gender subgroups (including and especially African American Muslims), Muslim perceptions of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and the public’s attitudes toward Muslim Americans. For its part, Smith’s work provided a particular focus on struggles that Muslim women face in living out their identities in a culture that emphasizes materialism and individualism.

Other pre-2001 scholarship provided in-depth studies of Muslim history, perhaps best typified by Allan Austin’s (1984) historical examination of
Muslim experiences in the Antebellum south and Yvonne Haddad and Adair Lummis’s (1987) book detailing the localized community ecologies of Muslims throughout the United States. Meanwhile, Richard Wormser’s (1994) focus on Muslim youth experiences and the community’s racial and ethnic diversity (particularly as it pertains to African Americans and the Nation of Islam) is complemented by Aminah McCloud’s (1995) work on African American Islam and, specifically, her contention that there is much greater diversity among “black Muslims” than typically assumed. Haddad and Smith (1994) explored the dynamics of developing an Islamic jurisprudence by American courts immigration trends, the effects of slavery and civil rights struggles, and Haddad and John Esposito (1997) offered a platform for scholars to advance gendered interpretations of the Qur’an.

Returning to the pre-9/11 literature on Muslims, the scholarship documents that many of the challenges Muslims face today—including government scrutiny and out-group-based discrimination—were present prior to the 9/11 attacks, though to a lesser extent. As noted earlier, a characteristic of these pre-9/11 academic works, however, is that they are primarily qualitative, which makes research replication more difficult. Importantly, some of the literature from this period could not agree on which group to study and instead focused on a wide range of identities, including Arab—and not Muslim—American mobility and discrimination. Articles by Nadine Naber (2000); Mona Faragallah, Walter Schumm, and Farrell Webb (1997); and Zeina Seikaly (2001) are but a few examples of influential works documenting Arab American identity, invisibility, discrimination, and inequality. Fu-

---

1. Concerning the Nation of Islam, we are conscious of the fact that many readers will have heard of the group and some of its leadership, including Louis Farrakhan. It bears mentioning, however, that while the group uses the term Islam in its name, the Nation of Islam does not practice an orthodox form of Islam. The main point of departure between the Nation of Islam and Islam as it is traditionally practiced is the Nation of Islam’s belief that God incarnate was a man named W. F. Fard who brought a series of teachings to the Detroit area in the 1930s. The group also believes that Fard’s protegé, Elijah Mohammad, was the Prophet. In assuming group leadership in 1934, Elijah Mohammad further articulated Nation of Islam beliefs, including that blacks are the master race and that a small percentage of people control the means of manipulating most of the human race in perpetuation of existing power structures (Lee 1996). The Nation of Islam may be best described as a culture of opposition established to counterbalance the substantial and negative effects of slavery and Jim Crow (Lipsitz 1988; Gardell 1996). Though the Nation of Islam has received substantial publicity at times and serves as a pathway to understanding perceptions and experiences of some African American Muslims in the United States, the group’s teachings and political ideologies are substantially removed from the practices of most American Muslims. Thus, we do not spend considerable space in this volume on the group.
ture political science scholarship on Muslim Americans stands on the shoulders of these seminal pre-9/11 studies and must take into account that scholarship must incorporate a shifting panethnic identity.

Though not a book on Muslims and the Trump presidency, Trump’s arrival on the political stage reminds us that this is the second time in two decades that major political forces have significantly affected Muslim life in America beyond what might be termed the baseline level of public suspicion or scrutiny of Muslims and Islam, which Jamal (2008) argues has existed in American politics for decades prior to 9/11. Before 9/11, Muslims were primarily identified by national origin and predominantly faced discrimination on this basis. Episodic events during this time were often connected to national-origin groups, and the conveyance of stereotypes was digested by the public as pertaining to specific national origin groups. For example, the Iranian hostage crisis during the Islamic Revolution of 1979 was related to Iranians in America, and the TWA hijacking in 1985 was related to Lebanese in America.

Following the 9/11 attacks and before the inflammatory rhetoric and policy implementation attempts from Trump and other Republicans, there was a pronounced spike in reported hate crimes against Muslims and Arabs that began in late 2001 and early 2002 (Human Rights Watch 2002). Before 9/11, only a few dozen anti-Muslim hate crimes per year were reported. The number reached five hundred by the end of 2001 and then stabilized in ensuing years, although an increase in incidents was detected after Trump’s election in 2016 (see Ingraham 2015; Pitter 2017; South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow 2001). Regardless of trend fluctuations in given years, it is clear that the post-9/11 period includes a generally higher level of public scrutiny directed at Muslim Americans (Cainkar 2007). And, as Jamal (2008) notes, maltreatment of Muslims (measured in reported hate crime incidents) increased exponentially from previous levels prior to 9/11.

There was a mix of positive and negative trends about the treatment of Muslims in the years after 9/11. On the one hand, through two audit studies on state legislators, Nazita Lajevardi (2018) finds that Muslim American individuals and their leaders are less able to access politics—either through an internship or through a legislative visit—compared to their white and Christian counterparts. On the other hand, Shane Martin (2009) finds evidence of legislator responsiveness to Muslims in their congressional districts and high-minded rhetoric from President George W. Bush in support of the Muslim community. These constructive government initiatives may have been encouraged by determination from American Muslims not to go into hiding following 9/11 but, instead, to work to ensure their civil liberties, while cooperating with law enforcement where appropriate (see Bakalian
and Bozorgmehr 2009). Despite their attempts to cooperate with law enforcement, there was still a great deal of evidence that the federal government was complicit in violating Muslim civil liberties in the months and years following 9/11 (see Iflikhar 2007). For example, congressional officials like Representative Peter King of New York pushed consistently for increased FBI surveillance of the Muslim community. And it did not take long for political commentators at the time to introduce conflictual narratives about the nation’s “new normal” patterned on Huntington’s writings about the need for democratic societies to be wary of Islamic teachings and the Muslims who follow them (see Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2007). This framing of Islam has contributed to lingering anti-Muslim sentiment in media coverage (Dana, Barreto, and Oskooii 2011). Related work by Kimberly Powell (2011) and Nazita Lajevardi (2017) documents how the post-9/11 framing of both foreign and domestic Muslims in media coverage is voluminous and negative in sentiment. Muslim scholarship since 9/11 has continued the themes articulated in the earlier research, but with a more robust focus on discrimination against Muslims, Muslim political attachments and activity, and the dynamics of Muslim identity—mainly from the vantage point of quantitative data. In this section, we discuss briefly opportunities for pushing our understanding of American Muslim politics forward.

Compared to those of other faiths, less is known about Muslim American political engagement (Ayers and Hoffstetter 2008), although scholars have made notable progress toward understanding both the social and psychological aspects of Muslim life in American society and politics. For example, John Ayers (2007), Ayers and C. Richard Hofstetter (2008), and Farida Jalazai (2011) used a hybrid of social psychological explanations for Muslim political behavior and engagement. Drawing on affective intelligence theory (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000), elements of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), and aspects of the personal religion indicators often used in the study of American Christianity (e.g., Leege and Kellstedt 1993; Djupe and Gilbert 2006), Ayers and Hofstetter (2008) and Jalazai (2009) assessed how reported anxiety levels as measured in a 2004 national Zogby poll of American Muslims affect reported political participation across a variety of Muslim ethnic subgroups. The authors report a robust and positive relationship between reported anxiety and Muslim political engagement, with racial and ethnic subgroup controls (African Americans excepted) showing little impact on the outcome variables. Gendered perceptions of community and economic interests have also been found to differentiate engagement patterns between women and men (Jamal 2005a). Muslims also increase stated levels of political tolerance when engaging in social network
discussion with other Muslims (Djupe and Calfano 2012). The clear effects from the religion variables in these studies suggest a variety of areas for follow-up, but new data and research design approaches are needed.

Taking a cue from Jamal’s (2005b) landmark study, some scholars turned their attention to Muslim politics as meted through activity in mosques or Islamic centers. The best known of these projects is the Muslim American Public Opinion Survey (Barreto et al. 2007). Rather than attempting to generate a representative sample of U.S. Muslims—a challenge given the lack of religious affiliation data in the U.S. Census—Barreto et al. used a form of probability and cluster sampling that focused on sample generation from high-density Muslim population areas across the United States. The researchers then surveyed mosque attendees in six metropolitan areas: Seattle, Dearborn, San Diego, Irvine, Riverside, and Raleigh-Durham. A similar effort is the 2006 Mosque Survey of Muslims in the United States (Choi, Gasim, and Patterson 2011). A smaller such effort was conducted in 2013 in Southern California (Lajevardi, Marar, and Michelson 2014). These mosque-based studies provide numerous insights into Muslim partisanship, voting behavior, opinion, and political activity. They also reflect Jamal’s oft-cited link between mosque involvement, group consciousness/identity, and political activity.

There thus exists already a body of work aimed at understanding various aspects of (Arab and) Muslim life in America. This older line of scholarship documents that many of the challenges faced by Muslims today, including scrutiny and discrimination, were present prior to the 9/11 attacks. However, the increasing association of Muslims with terrorism in the wake of the attacks, and emphasized during the 2016 presidential campaign, served to crystallize for many Muslims a newly salient identity as part of the Muslim American community and their role in American politics. Arguably, what 9/11 did for the Muslim politics literature was to draw attention from quantitatively oriented scholars who could leverage survey data to assess the American Muslim community. Less clear is that 9/11 changed essential questions scholars asked about Muslims prior to the event. If anything, 9/11 made Muslim scholarship more urgent to conduct, and the examples of non-Muslim and government scrutiny more obvious as quantitative data was collected. But, in reality, the scholarship generally has not coalesced around common theoretical frameworks or empirical approaches; nor has it fully unpacked the determinants of Muslim American political behavior. This volume looks to help pivot toward greater commonality.

Much of the non-Muslim public has been conditioned since 2001 to hold negative and scrutinizing views of Muslims living in their midst (Penning 2009), though the “otherization” and racialization of Muslims made them
social targets at least as far back as the 1960s (Jamal 2008). The public’s negative attitudes toward U.S. Muslims may help explain why, despite inclusive rhetoric from former presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, Muslim organizations have long claimed a systematic effort by law enforcement at all levels to profile, monitor, and harass community members (Johnson 2014). Yet it is not only Republicans who contribute to negative impressions of American Muslims and Islam. Democrats and other thought leaders are also responsible, particularly when these leaders hold local and state level office in the south and portions of the Midwest (Decker 2015).

The result is that Muslims in America have encountered imposed identity dynamics on a large and bipartisan scale, the intent of which has been to accentuate a national identity that preferences racial, ethnic, political, and religious identities that are decidedly non-Muslim. This boundary formation casts Muslims in the position of a subaltern group whose role in the social and political structure is that of outsiders, and perhaps dangerous ones at that (Haddad and Smith 1994; Reif 1995; Calfano 2018). To be sure, Muslims have some agency in creating social representations and shared identities according to sincerely held preferences (Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins 2004), but Muslim efficacy in this process is limited in the U.S. context. Indeed, in the aftermath of their collective treatment since the 9/11 attacks, Muslims are among the most delegitimized groups from both a political and social standpoint (Reicher 2004; Pew Research Center 2017a).

**Muslim Americans Workshop and This Volume**

The studies referenced above have generated important insights into Muslim American politics, but much remains unknown and unexplored. As previewed above, we brought interested faculty and graduate students together for a full-day workshop in December 2016 at Menlo College as a first step in planning and conducting a large-N, in-depth, multilingual survey of this understudied community. Throughout the workshop, we discussed the extant literature, identified lingering questions, and planned how to ensure that the data collection is conducted so as to maximize usefulness and minimize overlap of effort by various scholars. We followed up with a second workshop at the University of California, Los Angeles, in December 2017.

Workshop participants identified several themes ripe to explore in the ongoing study of Muslim Americans, including identity, behavior, and policy preferences. Specific research topics included the racialized and panethnic formation of Muslim American identity in the years after the 9/11 attacks, predictors of Muslim American political participation and activism, the difference between religious identity and religiosity, the factors that
strengthen Muslim American identity, testing respondents’ knowledge of Islam, covert versus overt identity, and how negative and positive discrimination have affected identity.

While discussing the available samples and previous measures of Muslim American political behavior, participants expressed frustration. This is in part because Muslim Americans often report participating in politics at the same rate as whites. Scholars have strong reservations about this finding and question whether social desirability bias may be responsible for driving high reporting rates. Workshop attendees offered numerous alternative suggestions for measuring civic participation by Muslim Americans, including attending meetings addressing Muslim-specific issues, studying collective versus individual political participation, and searching for examples of political elites who visit mosques in an effort to recruit the community (see Calfano, Lajevardi, and Michelson 2017).

Increased recent attention to Muslim Americans has led to the emergence of a Muslim American political identity. Polls indicate that faith is important to Muslims in making their voting decisions (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014). And American foreign policy in the Middle East and U.S. relations with Muslim countries have been influential in solidifying Muslim American identity (Haddad and Harb 2014). Issues that were salient to American Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11 likely differed from those that were important prior, and may have since evolved with rising Islamophobia, increased terrorism, and the emergence of Trump as a presidential contender in the 2016 presidential election. Muslims have every reason to be concerned with policy given President Trump’s repeated attempts to halt entry to the United States from many majority-Muslim countries. Other policies discussed during Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign may yet find their way into an executive order or new legislation, such as increased surveillance of U.S. mosques, the policing of low-income Muslim neighborhoods, and the implementation of a Muslim registry. Researchers hope to explore Muslim American attitudes and reactions toward these policies that affect their communities, as well as how Muslim American identity is related to other political attitudes. These include policies relevant to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, economic policy, environmental policy, immigration policy, the secularization of religion in the United States, interventionist foreign policy stances, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

To explore these themes, scholars must devise novel methodological and sampling techniques (some of which feature in the following chapters). Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to field a nationally representative survey of American Muslims. The good news is that the Pew and Institute for Social Policy and Understanding studies provide templates for researchers
in generating something close to a representative sample. The bad news is that developing these representative studies is costly. In addition, existing surveys tend to lag in their inclusion of African American Muslim respondents (compared to white, Asian, and Middle Eastern Muslims). Given the importance of intersecting religious and racial identities, working to improve the inclusion of African Americans in Muslim American survey samples should be a priority for researchers. Doing so will require building greater trust between members of the Muslim community and researchers, something that until now has been challenging given rational fears of surveillance by Muslim Americans generally and by African American Muslims in particular. Previous studies have been creative in how they identify and incorporate American Muslims into their surveys. Given that American Muslims are difficult to identify (e.g., no data collection on religion in the U.S. Census), scholars are challenged with respondent recruitment, and must often rely on convenience, unrepresentative, and small samples. Moreover, heightened anxiety stemming from political rhetoric and policy may make Muslim reluctance to participate in scholarly research an even greater challenge for scholars (Calfano, Lajevardi, and Michelson 2017).

Finally, we note the attention that researchers, policy makers, and advocacy groups must pay to any policy recommendations that stem from this research. Some empirical work (e.g., Hobbs and Lajevardi 2018; Oskooii 2016) has demonstrated that, in the face of discrimination, American Muslims have responded by retreating, feeling anxious, and censoring themselves. One recommendation that community and religious leaders have offered to American Muslims, as Karam Dana and colleagues (2018) point out, is to remove religious identifiers—such as the hijab and other religious garb—and become more invisible as a means of avoiding harassment. Moreover, there is ample anecdotal evidence that Muslim Americans report fearing the visibility they encounter in ordinary American society. These fears are predominantly rooted in anxieties over physical harm. We encourage readers to consider whether invisibility, even if temporary, is a realistic diagnosis in a pluralistic society.

Overview of the Book

In the following chapters, we present a number of studies covering a variety of topics assessing the Muslim American experience post-9/11 era and prior to the Trump era. If we are ever to truly understand how this community has come to fare so negatively in recent times, it is critical that researchers have a firm grasp of the Muslim American experience in the intervening fifteen years. The approach we take in each of the following chapters is to highlight
an example of a contemporary political issue or topic facing Muslim Americans post-9/11. These chapters span interactions with law enforcement, reactions to identity labels used in Muslim surveys, the role of gender relations, and methodological suggestions for assessing Muslim Americans. As part of each chapter, we also explore where extensions of research on the questions and findings posed might go next. This is where we consider opportunities for innovation in political science methodology to build on insights the authors of each chapter present. We now present highlights from each of the following chapters.

Chapter 2 provides a historical overview and focuses on the variable relationships Muslims and the United States have had since the nation’s founding. This relationship is sometimes positive, sometimes negative, and always dense in political and societal pressures and opinions. In examining this relationship, Matt Barreto and Karam Dana walk readers through a basic history and profile of Muslims in the United States. The authors then examine how discrimination and politics impact American Muslims, both native and foreign born. The functions of the mosque and the impacts of 9/11 are also highlighted, as they both play roles in the social and political development and stigmatization of Muslims.

Chapter 3 focuses on Islam and gender. The visibility of the hijab and the widespread discussions and now enactments of burqa bans throughout the world since 9/11 indicate that a focus on gender is necessary to understand an important facet of Muslim discrimination. Since dominant interpretations of Islam have developed outside the United States, it is instructive to briefly review the dynamics of gender rights within the wider Muslim world. While Islam is a global religion, much of the popular thought surrounding Islam, including gender relations between Muslims, comes from the Arab world. There is a complex history of gender status within Islamic societies. The articulation of alternative and more liberal/feminist constructs within Islam notwithstanding, the continuing controversy surrounding women’s rights and Islam is spurred by traditionalist Islamism’s influence across state borders—a reality even more pronounced in the social media age. Clearly there is a history of patriarchal interpretation in Islam that has caused immense difficulty for women, but what does this mean for American Muslim women? The authors offer a brief review of what scholars have said thus far about this question, as well as some initial thoughts for further scholarly reflection.

Chapter 4 focuses on Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans’ battle for recognition and on how the preferred ethno-racial identities of members of this community help us understand Muslim political attitudes and behaviors. First, the authors review the history of the battle to be recognized as
white by various U.S. subgroups, particularly by Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans. Second, they review how those identities have been highlighted and activated since 2015 as a result of the Trump election campaign and the actions and policies of the early Trump administration. Next, the authors describe their hypotheses about identity and describe findings from a unique data collection effort in California in 2013 and in an online sample of Muslim Americans in 2017 (after President Trump’s election). Fourth, and finally, they discuss how their findings help predict what we expect to see from Muslim American and Middle Eastern Americans moving forward.

Chapter 5 considers the tenuous relationship between American Muslims and the law enforcement community post-9/11. Since 9/11, law enforcement agencies have enacted surveillance programs typified by the New York Police Department’s surveillance program that extended to all mosques within a one-hundred-mile radius of New York City and President Obama’s Countering Violent Extremism program. This chapter considers the nuanced challenges and opportunities for government and law enforcement agencies in serving a minority group like American Muslims in the post-9/11 context.

Chapter 6 builds on the law enforcement theme in Chapter 5 by focusing on how the post-9/11 scrutiny has affected American Muslims’ relationship with U.S. law enforcement. Rachel Gillum examines whether individual Muslims believe that their religious identity will result in differential treatment by authorities. Using a randomized survey experiment, Gillum compares Muslims’ attitudes toward police behavior when the suspect is Muslim American versus a different background. She explores the reasons for the variance in Muslims’ levels of trust in the police and attitudes toward government, including the effect of immigrants’ experiences with law enforcement in their country of origin. Her analysis suggests that citizenship and expectations for assimilation and equality matters for perceptions of this relationship. Specifically, U.S.-born Muslims have internalized negative views of government, and are more likely to anticipate that police behavior toward Muslims will be discriminatory. Foreign-born Muslims, however, do not appear to believe that the police treat Muslims differently than non-Muslims and, instead, base their judgments of American law enforcement on their experiences in their country of origin. Immigrant Muslims whose home country had corrupt institutions are more likely to expect bad behavior from American police forces.

Chapter 7 shifts the focus from American Muslims to the American public writ large and details how Islam has played a key role in the growing differences between Republicans and Democrats. The author argues that the conflict over the 9/11 Mosque was the “first shot” in a growing cultural di-
vide between partisans over Islam. Partisan conflict over Islam had not fully developed by 2010. But a year later, Republicans were increasingly likely to see Islam negatively and to accept the false notion that Obama was not born in the United States, to believe that the president was himself a Muslim, and to see a “clash of civilizations” between Christianity and Islam. Republicans exploited fears of radical Islam by linking it to what had seemed to be an uncontroversial community center in Manhattan. By 2016 the conflict over identities had moved to the center of political debate. Utilizing survey data from several sources, the author offers an assessment of the dynamics behind the public’s negative views of Muslims, which increasingly fall along partisan lines.

Chapter 8 continues with the focus on non-Muslim perceptions by exploring results from a survey experiment on non-Muslim residents in Chicago intended to spur intergroup trust. The authors find that, while priming religious identity among Christian subjects helps improve trust across the board, this effect does not extend to trust of Muslims. Only the priming of religion and superordinate group framing (in the form of asking about one’s willingness to help out-group members) shows consistent statistically significant and positive effects on perceptions of the Muslim out-group.

Chapter 9 shifts to the question of American Muslim identity and assesses whether asking Muslims to identify “first” as Muslim or American (as the question has frequently been used in Pew surveys) affects how Muslims respond to political and policy-related survey questions. Using data from the 2007 Pew national survey of Muslims residing in the United States, the authors examine the relationship between group identification, gender, and race with opinions regarding Islam’s treatment of women, evaluations of Al Qaeda, and the role Arabs played in the 9/11 attacks. Second, the authors use the theory of social identity performance to develop expectations as to how Muslims responses to questions about political motives and activities are influenced by priming questions that force respondents to acknowledge and prioritize their religious identity.

In Chapter 10, Youssef Chouhoud studies Muslim Americans’ political tolerance, an indicator of assimilation. With anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States relatively high and periodically spiking in accordance with intermittent controversies (e.g., the so-called Ground Zero mosque), investigating the attitudes of American Muslims themselves could shed light on the factors influencing negative appraisals of this community. That is, animosity and intolerance toward this religious minority (which previous chapters in this volume have elaborated on) may be motivated in part by a belief that Muslims in America are particularly dogmatic and wish to impose their views rather than allow all views to be heard. The movement to ban sharia
in several state legislatures across the country, for example, speaks to the perception that Islam promotes a legal and political system that seeks to supersede existing U.S. laws and government.

In Chapter 11, Karam Dana and Matt Barreto explore the different methodologies that can be used to gather public opinion survey data among Muslims in the United States and what the challenges and opportunities are with these different approaches. Ultimately, the authors conclude that social scientists can and should collect more public opinion data from American Muslims so that their viewpoints can be included in the national debate about diversity and democracy. To this end, the authors focus on large-\(n\) quantitative public opinion data as a methodological approach for understanding Muslim American social and political incorporation.

In Chapter 12, we tie the previous chapters together by considering future directions of research in Muslim American scholarship, including methodological ways of assessing the effects of Muslim American experiences through techniques such as random assignment in experiments. Although this is not a book on Trump, the 2016 election reminds students of identity politics and related subjects that the maltreatment of minority groups—even those that have seen some progress in their social status relative to the majority—is ripe for reoccurrence without much warning. Though it is impossible to predict exactly where the effects of Trump’s anti-Muslim rhetoric (and attendant reaction by those sharing his worldview) will lead, it is safe to suggest that any earlier attempts by leaders of both major political parties to encourage Americans to discount negative stereotypes of Muslims have been stunted as a result of the president’s posture toward Islam and its followers.

REFERENCES


