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Hatred of the Hijab: Islamophobia and Muslim Women in America

Abstract

In this paper, I investigate the phenomenon of Islamophobia in the United States, specifically how it affects Muslim women. Many scholars have researched Islamophobic speech using stereotypes of Muslim men, but research on stereotypes of Muslim women is lacking. Thus, I address the following question: Does a major terrorist attack cause a rise in Islamophobic rhetoric, and does this vary by perpetrator gender? I create a typology of Islamophobic rhetoric that outlines three different types: *Muslim men are terrorists*, *Muslim women are oppressed*, and *Muslims cannot assimilate*. I hypothesize that a major terrorist attack would cause an increase in Islamophobic rhetoric coming from elites. To investigate this, I chose five terrorist attacks to research in depth, then I used Congressional records to understand elite rhetoric after these attacks, taking into account perpetrator identity and using the three types of Islamophobia I outline. Muslim women are not often discussed or included in discussions, whereas Muslim men are discussed, albeit often in a negative light. I found that *Muslim men are terrorists* and *Muslims cannot assimilate* Islamophobia are evident in elite rhetoric after terrorist attacks, but *Muslim women are oppressed* Islamophobia is not often overtly present.

Intro

Racism is systemic and institutionalized in the United States. People of color are discriminated against by both individuals and institutions. In a country where we celebrate individuality and uniqueness in white people, we seem to struggle to see members of nonwhite groups as individuals at all. The term Islamophobia had to be coined because Muslims were experiencing a form of discrimination and prejudice that was based not on race, but on their

religion. In my paper, I seek to understand how the phenomenon of Islamophobia manifests in the United States. I also want to understand what Muslim women are experiencing. I address the following questions: Does a major terrorist attack cause a rise in Islamophobic rhetoric, and does this vary by perpetrator gender?

To answer this question, I research elite rhetoric, specifically rhetoric coming from Congress members during the days following a terrorist attack. According to the elite cues theory, public opinion is shaped by the nature of conflict between political elites (Berinsky 2007). The rhetoric and positions of political elites shape the beliefs of the public on issues where the general public has little knowledge or expertise. Instead of using a cost, benefit, and risk analysis, the public often turns to political rhetoric to ascertain what their position should be (Berinsky 2007). Because of this, public opinion toward Muslims, terrorism, and other related issues should closely follow the rhetoric of political elites, which is why I use Congressional records for this project.

Review of Literature on Islamophobia

Following the events of 9/11 in America, the buzzword “Islamophobia” has popped up in response to different policies and speeches made by elites. But what is Islamophobia exactly? Looking at research by credentialed academic researchers and journalists, I have identified three main types of Islamophobia: *Muslim men are terrorists*, *Muslims are unable to assimilate*, and *Muslim women are oppressed*. In comparing these schools of thought, the Islamophobia toward women is the most compelling because it deals with the intersectionality of identity -- Muslim women’s identity as often not white, women, and Muslim. Below I detail studies on each of the three types of Islamophobia.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND VIOLENCE/TERRORISM

Some scholars have come to the conclusion that Islamophobia is simply the belief that *Muslim men are terrorists*. They understand Islamophobia to be the fear of violent, fanatical, extremist Muslim men, even though the majority of Muslim men are not terrorists. Studies have shown that crime is more likely to be labeled as terrorism when it is committed by Muslims than when it is committed by white non-Muslims (West and Lloyd 2017). Increased negative news coverage, especially after a major terrorist attack, leads to a negative perception of Muslims as inherently violent and increases anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and Islamophobic tendencies (West and Lloyd 2017; Navarro 2017; “Significant spike” 2019; Çiftçi 2012; Beydoun 2016). In fact, in Spain 60% of people surveyed after a terrorist attack believe Muslims are violent, 83% think Muslims are fanatical, and 68% think Muslims support al-Qaeda. In the United States, 47% of those surveyed believe Muslims are violent, 46% think Muslims are fanatical, and 54% believe Muslims support al-Qaeda (Çiftçi 2012). Muslim men specifically are seen as violent and dangerous (Saad 2006; West and Lloyd 2017; Beydoun 2016). For example, in one poll, 31% of Americans said they would feel nervous if they noticed a Muslim man on their flight, but only 18% would feel the same about a Muslim woman (Saad 2006).

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE HIJAB // WOMEN AS ACCEPTORS OF REPRESSION

Other scholars have come to the conclusion that Islamophobia is the belief that Muslim women are acceptors of oppression. Scholars focus on the hijab or veil as a symbol of oppression, and they have found that Muslim women who wear the hijab face more Islamophobia than Muslim women who do not wear the hijab. Women who wear the hijab often face discrimination due to the stigmatization of the hijab because it is often represented negatively, and thus the Muslim women who wear them are perceived as oppressed (Chapman

2016; Majdeed 2013; Tagouri 2015). Most media sources display ignorance of the religious significance of the hijab, which results in the negative representation (Chapman 2016). The intersectionality of being both a Muslim, a woman, and, in some cases, a person of color causes Muslim women to face a distinct type of discrimination, and Muslim women are seen as oppressed and submissive (Majdeed 2013; Chapman 2016; Tagouri 2015). Additionally, the negative representation of Muslims affects the social identity of a Muslim, affecting how a Muslim sees herself, even though clothing does not affect the level of liberation (Chapman 2016; Çiftçi 2012; Tagouri 2015). The negative perception of Muslim women leads to instances of prejudice and Islamophobia (Reynolds 2019; Banarjee 2018), such as Air Canada officials forcing a Muslim girl to remove her hijab in public after she had gone through security (Reynolds 2019). One woman was barred from speaking in court because her hijab was deemed not appropriate attire (Banarjee 2018). This type will be referred to as *Muslim women are oppressed Islamophobia*.

UNABLE TO ASSIMILATE

A final type of Islamophobia examines the pressure Muslims feel to assimilate into white culture and the condemnation they face if they do not (Tagouri 2015; Bramlett-Solomon and Carstarphen 2017). People tend to see Muslims through an orientalist view, which not only negates the cultural diversity of the Muslim population, but also looks at Muslims as foreign, Arab, and unable to assimilate (Beydoun 2016). According to Edward Said, orientalism is about viewing Arab culture through the lens of European superiority and Arab inferiority (Said 36). Through that lens, Europeans and the west see middle eastern culture as backward and in need of reform, and that reform must be toward western ideals since the west is superior. It also leads to a disregard of the opinion of middle easterners, because the west knows what is best for them

(Said 38). At its core, orientalism is the Eurocentric lens through which Europeans view middle eastern culture. European superiority is a given, and thus in all areas middle eastern culture, religion, and politics are inferior and require reform to assimilate into western culture, causing the *Muslims are unable to assimilate* type of Islamophobia.

Out of all the schools of thought, I am choosing to focus on the school of thought that examines Islamophobia directed at Muslim women, stereotyping them as passive as acceptors of repression. I plan to examine the prevalence of this rhetoric in elite speech.

As a result of Islamophobia, Muslim women experience discrimination related to the hijab (Hughes 2016; Banerjee 2018; Reynolds 2019; Chapman 2016), and they are stereotyped as submissive or oppressed (Ramirez 2010; Hughes 2016). Much scholarly research on Muslim women centers around the veil, as it is a visible symbol of Islam and the center of many negative stereotypes (Hughes 2016; Ramirez 2010; Chapman 2016; Ahmed n.d.). The veil represents the fusion of women's issues with class, politics, and culture. It symbolizes the debate between Western culture and Eastern culture, European superiority or nationalism, backwardness or progressive reform, and colonial feminism. Colonial feminism is a phenomenon that was solidified in the late 19th century with the European colonization of the middle east and Qassim Amin's book *Tahrir Al-Mar'a (The Liberation of Woman)* (Ahmed n.d. 129). Some Arab groups and European colonizers saw the abolition of the veil as a necessary step toward social reform, because the middle east felt the need to "catch up" with Europe (Ahmed n.d.). This belief still exists today, because when Muslim women wear the veil, they face discrimination, such as being forced to remove the hijab publicly and go through intense security searches in airports (Reynolds 2019), not being heard in court because a hijab is not deemed appropriate court attire (Banerjee 2018), or having a more difficult time getting elected than if they did not wear the

hijab (Hughes 2016). Muslim women who wear the veil face verbal abuse and physical violence. They have been fired from jobs, prevented from playing sports, turned away from banks, stores and other businesses, and refused public assistance (Hughes 2016). There have been proposals to ban hijabs in every western country (Hughes 2016). On the other hand, if a Muslim woman does not choose to wear the hijab, she is seen as a model minority. She is seen as modern, secular and a contributor to the economy (Hughes 2016). Essentially, she is seen as better and more progressive than a Muslim woman with a hijab. It is theorized that negative representation of the veil affects how a Muslim woman sees herself. She will begin to internalize the negative stereotypes of herself and she might start believing them, which is detrimental to her self-esteem (Chapman 2016; Tagouri 2015).

The Muslim woman is constantly stereotyped as oppressed by Muslim men or submissive to authority. Muslim women are generalized into the *Muslims are unable to assimilate* form of Islamophobia as well as the *Muslim women are oppressed* form (Tagouri 2015; Ramirez 2010); however, an unveiled Muslim woman is seen as breaking the chains of oppression, and she is more likely to be elected to government positions and not receive as much discrimination (Hughes 2016). Four in ten Americans admit to feeling prejudiced against Muslims (Saad 2006). Again, constant negative representation and stereotyping is detrimental to the way a Muslim woman sees herself (Chapman 2016; Tagouri 2015).

Muslim women are oppressed Islamophobia is not a 21st century phenomenon. It has historical roots, arising both from Islamic culture and Western interpretation of that culture. Evidence suggests women were actually held in high esteem before the rise of urban societies and city-states (ex. Catal Huyuk) (Ahmed n.d. 11). However, the rise of city states placed more importance on warrior culture and increasing population, both of which led to a view of women's

sexuality and reproductive ability as property to be gained and controlled, which greatly influenced Islamic culture (12). In this Mesopotamian culture, Assyrian law permitted pawning out wives and children, beating them and piercing their ears, and even mutilating them with no liability. Men could easily obtain a divorce, but women could only get a divorce with great difficulty (14). Women's sexuality was controlled, but men were not held to the same standard of purity. Veiling was practiced in Mesopotamian culture, but only wives and daughters, concubines accompanying their mistress, and former sacred prostitutes who were now married were required to wear a veil. Harlots and slaves were forbidden to veil; thus, veils marked the upper classes and differentiated between respectable women and those who were publicly available to have sex with. Essentially, they indicated which women were under male protection and which women were not (14-15). This means that up until Islam was founded, the veil signified class and sexual activity, and it did not connote other, grander implications or issues.

After the Sasanian conquest, women had even less rights. There were new restrictions on women's participation in legal transactions (17) and larger harems, which meant widespread secluding and veiling (18). Under the Sasanians, Zoroastrianism emphasized submission of wives and women as property. However, after the rise of Christianity and the establishment of jahilia practices, there were multiple kinds of marriage, both polyandrous, polygamous, open, and other forms of marriage. Women had more access to divorce and were able to participate more in central issues of the day (42).

When Islam was found in 630 CE, it established patrilineal, patriarchal marriage as the sole legitimate form of marriage (41). This shift began with Muhammed, whose first wife Khadija exemplified jahilia marriage practices, which meant she owned and controlled wealth, married a younger man, had no male intermediary, and was monogamous (42). However, all

Muhammed's other marriages, which occurred after the founding of Islam, reflected Islamic values. They were non-monogamous and involved intense control of women by male guardians. For example, Aisha married Muhammed at age 9 or 10 and began veiling and being secluded with his other wives. The acceptance of women as participants and authorities on important community issues declined as Islam took hold (43). Islam's rules went back to those Mesopotamian laws, making it virtually impossible for women to get a divorce and controlling women by secluding them from the outside world (60). After Muhammed's death there were many rebellions, often led by women because of his restrictive policies toward women (60). However, Umar took control and put in place even more restrictive policies, including segregated prayer and appointing a male imam for women (63).

Women's issues and the significance of the veil did not begin to be discussed until the 1800s, with the rise of a global economy, the emergence of modern states in the region, and colonial domination in the middle east (127). Middle Easterners and Europeans began to discuss the treatment of women in Islamic law because Muslim scholars felt that they needed to catch up with the social and political culture of the west in order to have more economic success. This is when scholars began to link women's issues with nationalism and reform (128). Scholars like Qassim Amin saw the veil as a signifier of the inferiority and backwardness of Islamic culture and advocated for the abolition of the veil and more education for women as necessary steps toward keeping up with the west (129). However, not all Muslims thought this way, because of the association of the veil with nationalism and not succumbing to the culture of the colonizers.

An important piece of the symbolism of the veil comes from colonial feminism, which came about with the rise of feminism in the west. Britain combatted the feminist movement in its own country because it went against the Victorian mores and customs of women that they held

so dear, but they used the language of feminism to condemn Islam for its treatment of women. They used feminism to belittle and reinforce Arab nations as the “other” (151). In this same way, though *Tahrir Al-Mar’a* urged the abolition of the veil and other freedoms for women, which may seem feminist, in reality Amin was not advocating for women’s equality. He still wanted male dominance, but western-style male dominance rather than eastern-style. Colonial feminism was used to serve the interest of the colonizer, simply reinforcing European superiority (155). The debate over the veil has never put women’s emancipation and equality as a central issue--it has always been about the debate between western and eastern culture. Thus, colonial feminism could be thought of as essentially an extension of male nationalism.

Islamophobia against Muslim women is historical and present in the culture of the United States today. I hypothesize that female perpetrators of terrorist attacks should receive more criticism and face greater Islamophobia and discrimination than male perpetrators. Female criminals are treated unfairly in the criminal justice system, receiving more criticism because they are not only deviant in the eyes of the law, but they deviate from social expectations and gender roles (Freiburger & Marcum 2019). This affects the way they are treated and the way society views female criminals, which supports my hypothesis.

Case Studies

Back to the important question: does a major terrorist attack cause a rise in Islamophobic rhetoric? And is this different when the perpetrator is a woman? To answer this question, I chose five terrorist attacks in various locations, some with all male perpetrators, and some with a female perpetrator involved. Using two days of Congressional records when available, and two weeks of *New York Times* articles when Congress was not in session, I researched the elite

response to these terrorist attacks and looked at the number of Islamophobic statements, the type of Islamophobia present, and the party breakdown of that (when available).

Terrorist Attack	Number of Instances Islamophobic Rhetoric	Party Breakdown
Paris (November 13, 2015)	22	R - 16 D - 6
San Bernadino (December 2, 2015)	3	R - 3 D - 0
Orlando (June 12, 2016)	10	N/A
Brussels (March 22, 2016)	10	N/A
London (June 3, 2017)	12	N/A

1. Paris attack of 2015

A well-attended football game in Paris turned violent when three teams, organized by ISIS, committed multiple shootings and bombings on November 13, 2015 (“Paris attacks: what” 2015). Two men detonated suicide belts in different entrances of the stadium. Another man detonated at a nearby fast-food restaurant. At the same time, different shootings occurred at popular nightlife spots, restaurants, and diners (“Paris attacks: what” 2015). All of these men were traveling in black Seat cars. There were also three suicide bombers at an Eagles of Death Metal concert who shot into the crowd and then detonated suicide vests (“Paris attacks: what” 2015). A witness said one of the attackers shouted, “God is great,” in Arabic. Another witness

heard an attacker blaming President Hollande for intervening in Syria (“Paris attacks: what” 2015).

There were several perpetrators in this attack. Salah Abdeslam is thought to have been a driver and key actor in the attack. He had multiple convictions for petty crime and a drug charge; additionally, Belgian prosecutors said they questioned him and his brother earlier in 2015 (“Paris attacks: who” 2016). Samy Amimour was also involved. He was charged with terror offences in 2012 over claims he had planned to go to Yemen, and he was placed under judicial supervision. However, he dropped off the radar, prompting the authorities to issue an international arrest warrant. His father traveled to Syria to ask Samy Amimour to leave ISIS and return to France with him (“Paris attacks: who” 2016). Amimour refused to return at that time, which means he was able to travel to France without being noticed before the attack. Chakib Akrouh, Brahim Abdeslam, Foued Mohamed-Aggad also participated in the attack, along with “Ahmad al-Mohammad,” as his passport read, who posed as a Syrian refugee and used fake documents to avoid suspicion. Another man, “M al-Mahmod,” did the same. Hasna Aitboulahcen, the only woman perpetrator, was the cousin of Abdelhamid Abaaoud. She died with him in the shootout at their flat. It is unclear whether she blew herself up or if someone else blew her up. Omar Ismail Mostefai, Bilal Hadfi, and Abdelhamid Abaaoud (who is the suspected ringleader of the attacks) were also involved in the attack. Mohammed Amr and Hamza Attouh picked up Salah Abdeslam in France. Then, there were three drivers who helped Salah escape. All of these individuals involved were young French nationals who became radicalized while in France and traveled to Syria to join ISIS prior to the attack (“Paris attacks: who” 2016). Many were known to be associated with ISIS, but they were able to avoid prosecutors (“Paris attacks: who” 2016).

Looking at the congressional records following the attack, November 16 and 17, there were twenty-two speeches and nine pieces of legislation involving Islamophobic rhetoric. In general, democrats tended to emphasize standing with France as our ally, and they called for international coalition options. Republicans tended to advocate for immigration control, specifically blocking all Syrian refugees from coming into the country, though some democrats also supported that cause.

Interestingly, the word *barbaric* was used often in speeches referring to ISIS in these two days. In fact, *barbaric* was used eight times on the days following the Paris attacks. While their attacks were violent, the speeches that employ this word framed the conflict against ISIS as one of barbarians and savages against the modern, civilized world. For example, Mr. Young (IN - Republican) declared, “together we will defend civilization against barbarianism” (CRS 2015, Nov. 16. Vol. 161, No. 168; House of Rep.). This has dangerous and xenophobic implications for Muslims and Arabs, because they have historically been stereotyped as barbaric savages that need to be saved from themselves (Beydoun 2016). Five republicans and six democrats all gave speeches characterizing Muslims as barbaric, savage, or uncivilized, saying that the civilized world needs to fight back. They pitted the conflict as East versus West, uncivilized versus civilized. This generalizes not only all Muslims, but the entire region of the middle east, which is an example of not only *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia, but also *Muslims cannot assimilate* Islamophobia. Interestingly, this type of rhetoric was evenly split between democrats and republicans, meaning that Islamophobia is not partisan, though it manifests differently within the two parties.

Many members of Congress called for immigration reform, wanting to stop all Syrian refugees from entering until they could make the vetting process even stricter. Eleven members

of Congress gave speeches calling for stopping the flow of Syrian refugees altogether. Out of the eleven members who gave speeches specifically on pausing immigration of Syrian refugees, ten were republicans and one was a democrat. Additionally, nine pieces of legislation were passed calling for the increase of security checks or stopping Syrian refugees from coming to America. Many were afraid that terrorists were coming to the US cloaked as refugees. As Mr. Sam Johnson (TX - Republican) said, “stopping these people from coming here is the right and commonsense thing to do” (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; House of Rep.). In the House of Representatives, Mr. Burgess (TX - Republican) argued that America should not open its borders because there was not enough time to do accurate and thorough background checks on all the refugees. He asserted that Texas will not accept any refugees from Syria, displaying *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia. Many mentioned the one attacker who the police believe slipped in as a refugee, though he came through Greece which has significantly lower security and background check standards than the US (CRS 2015, Nov. 16 Vol. 161, No. 168; House of Rep.). Mr. Zeldin (NY - Republican) stated that providing for the national defense “trumps any day of the week the charity of opening our doors to a Syrian who will blow himself or herself up on our streets in the name of Allah” (CRS 2015, Nov. 16 Vol. 161, No. 168; House of Rep.). His xenophobic statement exemplifies the *Muslim men are terrorists* form of Islamophobia by generalizing Syrian refugees as terrorists on a suicide mission. In the same vein, Mr. Yoder (KS - Republican) generalizes all the refugees and middle eastern nations, saying, “now is not the time to open our borders to refugees from countries who wish to do our citizens harm” (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; House of Rep.). Mr. Yoder’s statement shows the *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia. Some democrats did not want to pause immigration,

but they did advocate for greater security and background checks, so they were not included in the count of members who wanted to pause the acceptance of Syrian refugees.

Three of the speeches mention raping of women as first on the list of ISIS's crimes. This is intriguing, because according to a UN Report on the war crimes of ISIS, the rape of women is only a small percentage of the crimes that ISIS commits, some of which including killing, bombing, abducting and/or forced disappearance, executing without fair trial, torture, and specifically targeting women with torture and violence (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq 2014). Since crimes against women are not as high on the list as other ISIS crimes, it is notable that representatives latched onto that idea of women being oppressed, and they seem to use it in the same way representatives used colonial feminism historically. Notably, Ms. Warren (CA - Democrat) stated that ISIS is the enemy "of Islam and all modern civilizations, butchers who rape, torture and kill women and children" (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; Senate). This is not to say that raping women is not serious, but seeing as it is only a small portion of the terrible crimes and human rights violations that ISIS commits, it begs the question: why is this a focus? Is it truly a concern for the wellbeing of Muslim women? Or is it because Western society has an obsession with using the cause of women to justify their own militaristic objectives? The latter seems most likely, and as such these are three more examples of the *Muslim women are oppressed* Islamophobia.

Legislation	Who Proposed	Description	Did it pass
HR 3314	Mr. Babin (TX – Republican)	prohibits DHS from admitting refugees until Congress passes joint resolution to resume; requires Government Accountability Office to report cost of refugees, specifically those receiving Medicare, Medicaid, disability insurance, food stamps, and rental assistance	NO
HR 4033	Mr. Crawford (AR - Republican)	pauses Syrian refugee immigration; states choose whether to receive Syrian refugees	NO
HR 4025	Mr. Ross (FL – Republican)	prevents Federal funds from being used to admit Syrian refugees	NO
HR 4031	Mr. Byrne (AL - Republican)	“ ”	NO
HR 4044	Mr. Clawson (FL - Republican)	“ ”	NO
HR 4030	Mr. Palazzo (MS - Republican)	Amends Immigration and Nationality Act to ensure that any State where governor did not want to receive Syrian refugees does not have to receive them	NO
HR 4032	Mr. Poe (TX - Republican)	“ ”	NO
HR 4048	Mr. Graves (LA - Republican)	stop admission and resettlement of Syrian refugees until there are greater security protocols and more research to determine threat of refugees	YES
S 2284	Mr. Vitter (LA - Republican)	“ ”	NO

Eleven pieces of legislation were passed in response to the Paris attacks, nine of which included Islamophobic rhetoric. H.R. 3314 was introduced by Mr. Babin (TX - Republican). The bill would have prohibited the Department of Homeland Security from admitting refugees until Congress passes a joint resolution to resume admitting them. It also would have required the Government Accountability Office to report on the cost that refugees are to the government, specifically refugees receiving support from Medicare, Medicaid, disability insurance, the supplemental nutrition assistance program (food stamps), and rental assistance (CRS 2015, Nov.

16 Vol. 161, No. 168; House of Rep.). The bill was co-sponsored by eighty-six republicans and zero democrats. The bill came out of the Islamophobic rhetoric that generalized all refugees as terrorists, thus the sentiment was to stop immigration altogether. HR 4033 also pauses immigration of Syrian refugees and allows the states to choose whether they would like to receive Syrian refugees. It was introduced by Mr. Crawford (AR - Republican) and co-sponsored by two republicans (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; House of Rep.).

H.R. 4025, H.R. 4031, and H.R. 4044 were introduced by Mr. Ross (FL - Republican), Mr. Byrne (AL - Republican), and Mr. Clawson (FL - Republican) respectively. These bills prevented Federal funds from being used to admit Syrian refugees. With these pieces of legislation, a pattern of republicans reacting to terrorist attacks with Islamophobic legislation that halts immigration begins to appear (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; House of Rep.). They generalized all refugees and immigrants as terrorists, which is the *Muslim men are terrorists* form of Islamophobia. A related bill, HR 4030, amended the Immigration and Nationality Act to make sure that any State where the governor did not want to receive Syrian refugees does not have to receive them. The bill was introduced by Mr. Palazzo (MS - Republican) and co-sponsored by one republican (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; House of Rep.). This is further action based on the Islamophobic belief that Syrian refugees are terrorists and need to be kept out. HR 4032 said essentially the same thing, and it was introduced by Mr. Poe (TX - Republican) and co-sponsored by fifty-three republicans (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; House of Rep.). All of these bills say a very similar thing: Syrian refugees are terrorists, so they must be banned from entry into the US.

Mr. Graves (LA - Republican) introduced H.R. 4048 with the purpose to stop the admission and resettlement of Syrian refugees until there are greater security protocols in place

and more research done to determine the security threats posed by refugees. It was co-sponsored by six republicans and passed in the House of Representatives (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; House of Rep.). Another identical bill was posed in the Senate by Mr. Vitter (LA - Republican), S.2284. The bill was co-sponsored by seven republicans but was not voted on in that session (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; Senate). While these bills seem innocuous on the surface, since they halt immigration until there are more security and background checks put in place, they are not based on rationality and fact. The attacker in Paris who came in as a refugee came through Greece, and Greece's security process is significantly less time consuming and thorough. As Ms. Warren alluded to, sometimes all they can do is fingerprint them so that they can process them all (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; Senate). In contrast, America's security protocols and background checks are extremely thorough and time consuming, taking on average one and a half years for background checks, fingerprinting, and multiple interviews with different agencies, starting with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, to determine if they pose a threat (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; Senate). Additionally, especially in this case study of the Paris Attacks of 2015, the real threat was not terrorists coming in as refugees, but the so called "home-grown terrorists," those individuals residing in their own nation who become radicalized, all while staying right where they are. Even Mr. Cornyn (TX - Republican) stated, "one of the biggest threats is homegrown terrorists radicalized over social media and the Internet. Perhaps even more concerning to me than the threat of a potential attacker entering the United States is a self-radicalized attacker that is already here" (CRS 2015, Nov. 17 Vol. 161, No. 168; Senate). Thus, it can be determined that these members of Congress were reacting not to sure facts about our failing security system, but out of fear that *Muslim men are terrorists*.

To further quantify this, I looked at these code words - violent (total 13; 7 out of 8 times the word violent was used in HR on November 17 it was referring to Muslims), terrorist (167), radical (35), extremist/extremism (24), refugee (193), dangerous (5), immigrant (20), oppressed/oppression (1) barbaric (12). This measures how many times each code word is used when talking about Muslims or to refer to Muslims.

2. San Bernadino attack of 2015

The San Bernadino attack of December 2, 2015 is an important case study because it involves a female perpetrator. Husband and wife Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik, both heavily armed, killed at least fourteen people and wounded at least seventeen at the Inland Regional Center in the working-class community of San Bernadino, California (Nagourney et. al. 2015). Farook was an environmental inspector for the county health department, and he attended a departmental holiday party at the Inland Regional Center. After reportedly getting into a dispute, he returned around 11:00 am with Malik, both of them wearing masks and body armor (Nagourney et. al. 2015). They spent several minutes shooting inside the building, leaving behind three pipe bombs which never detonated. Then, they fled the scene in a black sport utility vehicle. Shortly after, the police found them, and a shootout between Malik, Farook, and about twenty officers resulted in the death of Farook and Malik (Nagourney et. al. 2015). According to the FBI, the couple pledged allegiance to ISIS on social media shortly before their shootout with the police. Additionally, Malik sent at least two private Facebook messages to some friends in Pakistan in 2012 and 2014, saying that she hoped to join the jihad fight someday (“Everything we know about the San Bernadino terror attack” 2015). There were multiple messages on her Facebook in late 2014 indicating religious extremism, which worried her family in Pakistan.

Farook was connected with at least two different terrorist organizations overseas. Enrique Martinez, Jr., Farook's neighbor, conspired with Farook and obtained two of the weapons used in the attack ("Everything we know about the San Bernadino terror attack" 2015). According to Martinez, who had converted to Islam at some point according to a law enforcement source, an even bigger attack was planned ("Everything we know about the San Bernadino terror attack" 2015).

After the San Bernadino attack, democrats responded with calls for gun control, while republicans called for stronger immigration control. Mr. Larson (CT - Democrat) gave a rousing speech calling for a vote on greater background checks for potential gun purchasers (CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; House of Rep). Mr. Gohmert (TX - Republican) countered this speech, saying that gun control would not have helped in the case of the San Bernadino attack because they had bombs, and he said, "it wouldn't change the evil in the hearts of radical Islamists who are bent on terrorizing and killing people....I don't know whether that shooter in Colorado Springs was self-described as a Christian or not. He obviously was confused about his gender" (CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; House of Rep). After his change of subject to focus on the Colorado Springs attack, Mr. Gohmert then made an alarming comment about how maybe someone would say that if the man had just been allowed in the little girls' restroom in elementary school, he would not have killed people (in reference to the attack on Planned Parenthood in Colorado Springs) (CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; House of Rep). He mentioned that certain politicians were calling for stronger gun control when they did not know where Farook got his weapons. He did not mention Malik at all. In fact, there is no mention of her in the congressional records following the attack.

In a speech by democrat Mr. Reid (NV - Democrat), he quoted various republican elites who disparaged Muslims. He says that Ben Carson described the Syrian refugees as “rabid dogs,” and Mike Huckabee referred to them as a bag of poisonous peanuts, which are both examples of increased *Muslims are unable to assimilate* and *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia surrounding a terrorist attack (CRS, 2015, Dec. 2 Vol. 161, No. 175; Senate). During this time, the Syrian refugee crisis was also a cause for debate in the US, so that would have contributed to the *Muslims are unable to assimilate* and *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia. Democrats encouraged stronger gun control in response to the San Bernadino attack. Mr. Deutch (FL - Democrat) spoke on the gun laws in America, and he advocated for more background checks since suspected terrorists can and have been legally purchasing guns and explosives (CRS, 2015, Dec. 2 Vol. 161, No. 175; House of Rep.). Mr. Kelly (IL - Democrat) advocated for the same, frustrated at the inaction of congress. Ms. Watson Coleman (NJ - Democrat) urged congress to “get moving” on gun control regulations, as did Mr. Peters (CA - Democrat) (CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; House of Rep).

On the other side, Mr. Russell (OK - Republican) advocated for less Islamophobic rhetoric surrounding the Syrian refugees, and he suggested that there should not be strict rules against them coming (CRS, 2015, Dec. 2 Vol. 161, No. 175; Senate). However, the discussion following revolved around restricting immigration from Syria and Iraq. The majority of republicans encouraged stronger immigration control. Mr. Gohmert (TX - Republican) spoke on the Syrian refugees, asserting that top security officials are saying that Syrian refugees cannot be properly vetted because so much is unknown about their actions and affiliations in Syria. He referenced an article that claims that many of the jihadists are children of Muslim immigrants or refugees. He argued that Muslim immigrants and refugees need to be asked, “are you one of the

two-thirds or so that have been reported to be in the United States or wanting to come into the United States as a Muslim who believes that Shari'ah law should replace the Constitution?" (CRS, 2015, Dec. 2 Vol. 161, No. 175; Senate). Mr. Gohmert went on to say that if that is so, their citizenship should be revoked. He argued that since so many terrorists are let in even after being vetted, the admission of Syrian refugees needs to stop. He also expressed frustration that the President chose to focus on changing the gun control laws that allowed known terrorists to obtain guns (CRS, 2015, Dec. 2 Vol. 161, No. 175; Senate). He consistently referred to refugees as "aliens" or "criminal aliens," and he advocated for a stop to all refugee admittance because they cannot be properly vetted (CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; House of Rep.). This language is Islamophobic in that it promotes an othering of Muslims and generalizes all Muslims and refugees as terrorists. Mr. Gohmert's speech displays the *Muslim men are terrorists* form of Islamophobia, as well as the tendency of the republican party to see terrorist attack as an issue of immigration control.

Legislation	Who Proposed	Description	Did it Pass
Amendment No. 2899 to amendment No. 2874	Mr. Paul (KY – Republican)	pause visas to countries at high risk for exporting terrorists, enhanced screening procedures	NO
HR 158	Ms. Miller (MI – Republican)	improve visa waiver system by banning individuals from high-risk countries and increasing background checks	YES
HR 4173	Mr. Boyle (PA – Democrat)	“ ”	NO
Amendment no. 2910 to amendment no. 2874	Ms. Feinstein (CA - Democrat)	(Feinstein amendment) permitted Attorney General to deny access to firearms and explosives to individuals on the terrorist watch list	NO
SA 2912 to amendment no. 2874	Mr. Cornyn (TX - Republican)	give suspected terrorist notice and 72-hour period of hearing to determine if the individual was truly a threat.	NO
Amendment to H. Res. 542	Mr. Polis (CO - Democrat)	ban people convicted of a federal crime and suspected terrorists from purchasing assault weapon/explosives	NO
Amendment to H. Res. 546	Mr. Polis (CO - Democrat)	“ ”	YES
S. 2344	Mr. Cotton (AR – Republican)	Provisions for (1) roving electronic surveillance, (2) "agent of a foreign power" means any non-U.S. persons engaging in international terrorism or prep, and (3) authority for the DoJ and the Director of National Intelligence to authorize targeting of non-U.S. persons outside the US for intelligence gathering. allows FBI to request name, address, length of service, local and long-distance toll billing records, and electronic communications records as long as it's relevant to fighting international terrorism Gives NSA access to business and telephone call records, and other tangible things collected under FISA before Nov. 29, 2015. The NSA must maintain such records for five years.	YES
S. 2356	Mr. King (ME – Independent)	amends Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA) to require an electronic communication service provider that has been issued a FISA court order requiring it to produce call detail records to notify the DoJ if the service provider will retain call detail records for < 18 months	NO

There was an uptick of *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia, and there was even an uptick in the *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia; however, there was a definite lack of *Muslim women are oppressed* rhetoric. Eight bills and seven amendments were introduced as a result of the San Bernadino attack, mainly relating to immigration laws and gun control. A notable amendment was proposed by Mr. Paul (KY - Republican). Amendment No. 2899 to amendment No. 2874 called for a “pause on issuing visas to countries that are at high risk for exporting terrorists to us” (CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; Senate, CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; House of Rep.). The bill would prevent refugees from high-risk countries in the middle east, like Syria, from entering the US, because of the fear that they either are terrorists or will become terrorists, echoing the sentiments of republicans such as Mr. Gohmert. It also laid out more screening and background checks for refugees in general. These refugees will be interviewed, fingerprinted, background checked, and monitored for evidence of terrorist activity. This amendment did not pass, but it does highlight the fear of Muslims, even those seeking refuge from volatile political and social upheaval and is therefore an example of the *Muslim men are terrorists* form of Islamophobia (CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; Senate, CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; House of Rep.). *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia is seen in not only the rhetoric, but in the bill itself which would prevent any refugee from seeking refuge in the United States. H.R. 158 and H.R. 4173, also proposed by Republicans, sought to improve the visa waiver system by banning individuals from high-risk countries and increasing background checks (CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; House of Rep).

The debate surrounding the Feinstein amendment displays the divide between parties. Amendment no. 2910 to amendment no. 2874 would have permitted the Attorney General to deny access to firearms and explosives to individuals on the terrorist watch list (CRS, 2015, Dec.

3 Vol. 161, No. 175; Senate). The amendment was countered by a republican proposal which would give the suspected terrorist notice and a 72-hour period of hearing to determine if the individual was truly a threat. This amendment, amendment no. 2912 to amendment no. 2874, did pass (CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; Senate). Democrats sought more gun control, as they do in many of these cases, but republicans often block those types of legislation. Mr. Polis (CO - Democrat) offered two separate amendments, one for H. Res. 542 and the other for H. Res. 546, both of which sought to ban people convicted of a federal crime and suspected terrorists from purchasing assault weapons and explosives, such as the AR-15 used in the San Bernadino attack. The amendment to H. Res 546 passed (CRS, 2015, Dec. 2 Vol. 161, No. 175; House of Rep., CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; House of Rep.). The rhetoric surrounding this bill's creation was mostly focused on terrorists and did not label all Muslims as terrorists or use other Islamophobic rhetoric.

Along with a bill which sought to increase the scrutiny of immigrants coming from the middle east as well as US citizens traveling to the middle east, Congress amended the USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, and the FISA Amendments Act of 2008. This bill made permanent provisions concerning:

- (1) roving electronic surveillance orders, (2) a revised definition of "agent of a foreign power" that includes any non-U.S. persons who engage in international terrorism or preparatory activities (commonly referred to as the "lone wolf" provision), and (3) authority for the Department of Justice and the Director of National Intelligence to authorize the targeting of non-

U.S. persons located outside the United States to acquire foreign intelligence information (CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; Senate).

The bill also allows the FBI to request the name, address, length of service, local and long-distance toll billing records, and electronic communications records of a person or entity as long as it is relevant to fighting international terrorism (CRS, 2015, Dec. 3 Vol. 161, No. 175; Senate). The next day, December 3, six republicans added their names to the bill (CRS, 2015, Dec. 2 Vol. 161, No. 175; Senate). The San Bernadino attack had the effect of raising concerns about terrorism on the home front, and therefore Congress amended legislation to keep a closer watch. While this is not Islamophobic, it does show a rise in concern about terrorism and a greater desire to gather intelligence on people to prevent a terrorist attack from occurring.

Again, the democrats tended to push for gun control legislation in the wake of a terrorist attack, and republicans tended toward immigration control, both parties fighting against the agenda of the other. There was a notable absence of oppressed Muslim women Islamophobia in this case, even though one of the perpetrators was a woman. No speeches included any mention of ISIS's mistreatment of women, which differs from the Paris attack case study.

Code words: violent (11), terrorist (108), radical (11), extremist/extremism (9), refugee (144), dangerous (12), immigrant (34), oppressed/oppression (1). Measures how many times this code word is used when talking about Muslims or to refer to Muslims.

3. Brussels attack of 2016

On March 22, 2016, bombings at the Maelbeek metro station in Brussels and the Brussels airport killed 32 people and left 340 wounded. Two different explosions occurred in the Zaventem airport in Brussels, just seconds apart, each at opposite ends of the departures hall. A

little over an hour later, one of the suicide bombers detonated in the middle carriage of a train. Khalid el-Bakraoui was the suicide bomber in the metro attack (“Brussels explosions” 2016). He was a Belgian national and a child of a Moroccan immigrant (The New York Times 2016). Osama Krayem was seen with el-Bakraoui at the metro station, and he also bought the bags used by the airport bombers (“Brussels explosions” 2016). He was able to travel to Brussels using a fake Syrian passport (Barnes et. al. 2016). Ibrahim el-Bakraoui was one of the airport suicide bombers (“Brussels explosions” 2016). He was a Belgian national, like his brother, and a child of a Moroccan immigrant (The New York Times 2016). Najim Laachraoui was the second suicide bomber in the airport attacks. He was also an accomplice of Salah Abdeslam, the main suspect in the Paris attacks (“Brussels explosions” 2016). He made at least two of the bombs used in the Paris attacks. Laachraoui was born in Morocco but grew up in Brussels. He also traveled to Syria in 2013 (Blaise & Breeden 2016). Mohamed Abrini was the third suicide bomber at the airport attacks (“Brussels explosions” 2016). He also grew up in Brussels, and he was radicalized in his own neighborhood (Barnes et. al. 2016).

The Senate was not in session during the day of the attack and the day following, so I pulled from two weeks of news stories from the *New York Times*, as well as a couple quotes from the House of Representatives, in order to investigate the Islamophobic rhetoric coming from elites in response to the Brussels attack. Similar to what has been found in the previous cases, words such as “barbaric” appeared multiple times, and the tendency to generalize all Muslims in rhetoric and policy pulled elites toward Islamophobia. For example, Pierre Jadoul, the president of the university that one of the victims attended, wrote in a Facebook post that his student was a “victim of the barbaric acts perpetrated on March 22 at the Maelbeek metro station” (Olivennes 2016).

Many articles honored the victims of the Brussels attack, and one described the vigil that many Belgian Muslims held in honor of those who died. Muslims rallied in front of the Maelbeek station, holding signs with messages such as, “NO VIOLENCE” (“Belgian Muslims Honor Attack Victims” 2016). They gave speeches condemning the violence and making a distinction between Islam and the violent act committed by terrorists. They released balloons, in the colors of the Belgian flag, into the air to commemorate and honor the victims (“Belgian Muslims Honor Attack Victims” 2016). However, another article investigated the far-right protests that interrupted the vigil. This anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant gathering included families and children, and they stirred up violence at the memorial (“Disruptions at Brussels Memorial” 2016). Curiously, it was difficult to find any information on these anti-Muslim protests. They were not featured in the video of the vigil and their exact rhetoric and actions were not discussed. However, in an article discussing the charging of the third man in the attack, there were a couple photos of the anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant protest. One was of some Muslim women watching police advance toward anti-Islam demonstrators, and the other was of police detaining a protestor (Breedon & Chan 2016). Curiously, there was only one article specifically about the anti-Muslim protest, which is curious because the *New York Times* has not shied away from criticizing far right movements in the past. This article described the disruption by the far-right protestors: “memorials in central Brussels to the victims of Tuesday’s bombings were briefly overrun by hooligans” (Blaise & Rubin 2016). The protestors were angry, chanting, “Break up Belgium,” and other nationalist party slogans (Blaise & Rubin 2016). They used flares and water bottles to attack those gathered in remembrance of the victims. The protestors used “fascist hand signals,” displaying their hatred (Blaise & Rubin 2016). They were so violent that the police had to disperse them using water cannons. And yet, the article referred to them as “hooligans” (Blaise

& Rubin 2016). Not once, but three times. This is a shocking variation from the Islamophobic theme, where instead of being generalized as evil, these primarily white rioters were characterized as rowdy sports fans and hooligans, briefly interrupting the memorial (Blaise & Rubin 2016).

The terrorist attacks at Brussels prompted many Islamophobic policies, which an article by Steven Erlanger detailed on March 22. He writes that the increase in terrorist attacks in Europe has led to increasing Islamophobic attitudes. Because of growing distrust in the European Union, the public felt like the EU was not in control of the terrorist threat, and they were fearful of the immigrants and refugees coming from the middle east. The article asserted that right-wing parties all over Europe conflate refugees with terrorists and call for a ban on immigration. For example, Nigel Farage, a leader of the conservative U.K. Independence Party, said, “I think we’ve reached a point where we have to admit to ourselves, in Britain and France and much of the rest of Europe, that mass immigration and multicultural division has for now been a failure” (Erlanger “Brussels attacks fuel debate” 2016). The tendency of the republican or right-wing party to respond to terrorist attacks with immigration bans and reforms is clear even in Europe. North Rhine-Westphalia, the German state next to Belgium, announced tighter controls on the border, and Mike Hookem, a member of the European Parliament and the UK Independence party, said that the “horrific act of terrorism shows that Schengen free movement and lax border controls are a threat to our security” (Erlanger “Brussels attacks fuel debate” 2016). Again, the response to terrorist attacks was an anti-immigration policy that indicates *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia. Additionally, Francois Hollande, the President of France, withdrew his proposed Constitutional change that would have stripped convicted dual national terrorists of their French citizenship. This proposal came from the right-wing party’s hardline response to the

terrorist attacks. Other members of the French government worried that this infringed on civil rights and unfairly targeted immigrants, highlighting the Islamophobic nature of the legislation. Hollande decided against the amendment, but this indicates the pattern of Islamophobic right-wing responses to terrorism.

Since the House of Representatives did meet on the day of and the day following the attack, I also looked at the speeches given on those days to corroborate the articles from the *New York Times*.

Legislation title	Who Proposed	Description	Did it pass
HR 4825	George Holding (NC – Republican)	(1) the U.S.-India defense partnership is vital to regional and international stability and security, and (2) the President should take action to formalize India's status as a U.S. major partner.	NO
HR 658	Mr. Poe (TX - Republican)	condemns the terrorist attack in Brussels in the strongest terms.	YES 409 yays, 0 nays, 24 not voting
(Not in the US)	President Hollande of France	Constitutional change that would have stripped convicted dual national terrorists of their French citizenship	NO

In the discussions about the Brussels terrorist attack, there were four speeches that included overtly Islamophobic rhetoric, two from republicans and once from a democrat. Mr. Gohmert (TX - Republican), a representative who often uses Islamophobic rhetoric after a terrorist attack, again explained the conflict as one of civilization versus savages, saying that Islamic terrorists want to “eliminate our civilized way of life” (CRS, 2016, Mar. 22, Vol. 162,

No. 45; House of Reps.). In a similar categorization, Ms. Jackson Lee (D - NY) called the attacks barbaric, and she asserted that radical Islam is a “danger...from those who respect the norms of civilized society” (CRS, 2016, Mar. 23, Vol. 162, No. 46; House of Reps.). Mr. LaMalfa (D - CA) suggested the Islamophobic policy of banning refugees from countries with Muslim populations, which so far has been found to be a republican response to terrorist attacks. However, Mr. LaMalfa is a democrat who insisted, “we don’t know who is coming here, and they certainly don’t look like refugees in a lot of cases” (CRS, 2016, Mar. 23, Vol. 162, No. 46; House of Reps.). These examples are all indicative of the *Muslim men are terrorists* form of Islamophobia, as well as *unable to assimilate* Islamophobia.

Several of the speeches fall into the pattern seen in many of these case studies where the terrorist attack is viewed as a conflict between East and West, or civilized and uncivilized, displaying the *unable to assimilate* form of Islamophobia. For example, Mr. Yoder (KS - Republican) condemned the terrorist attack in Brussels, saying, “we are at war against radical Islamic terrorism” because it is a “threat to our [United States’] freedom and way of life” (CRS, 2016, Mar. 22, Vol. 162, No. 45; House of Reps.). Mr. Yoder asserted that “we are right and just,” using moralization to justify any legislative action as righteous (CRS, 2016, Mar. 22, Vol. 162, No. 45; House of Reps.). While this is not as clearly Islamophobic as the previous speeches, it does display the tendency to frame the conflict as civilized versus uncivilized and paint Muslims as other, which is an example of *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia. Other notable speeches included Mr. Polis (CO - Democrat) who spoke against the invasion of Iraq because it allowed ISIS to flourish using American weapons (CRS, 2016, Mar. 22 Vol. 162, No. 45; House of Reps.). Mr. Chabot (OH - Republican) encouraged the House to make strong policy toward ISIS, arguing that “these terrorist thugs will continue to rape, pillage, and murder until

they are destroyed” (CRS, 2016, Mar. 23, Vol. 162, No. 46; House of Reps.). Again, this statement displays *Muslim women are oppressed* Islamophobia by focusing on the raping of women as a primary crime of ISIS.

There were some legislators who fought to keep Islamophobic rhetoric out of the conversation. Mr. Keating (MA - Democrat) thought it was important to recognize that “the prominent sentiment across the middle east identifies ISIS rhetoric and actions as contrary to the tolerance and teachings of Islam” (CRS, 2016, Mar. 23, Vol. 162, No. 46; House of Reps.). Mr. Takano (CA - Democrat) called for a rejection of discriminatory policies such as Muslim neighborhood watches or suggesting torture of enemies, and he encouraged Congress to uphold their values (CRS, 2016, Mar. 23, Vol. 162, No. 46; House of Reps.). The only legislation passed in the House of Representative was the H. Res. 658, which condemned the terrorist attack in Brussels in the strongest terms, proposed by Mr. Poe (TX - Democrat). In the discussion on this resolution, they kept Islamophobic rhetoric out of it, condemning ISIS and radical Islam but not all Muslims in general (CRS, 2016, Mar. 23, Vol. 162, No. 46; House of Reps.). Thus, the elites fell into the same patterns of republicans responding with immigration bans, with the notable exception of a democratic call for immigration bans (*Muslim men are terrorists*). Many elites labelled Muslims and middle eastern nations as uncivilized and barbaric (*Muslim are unable to assimilate*). *Muslim women are oppressed* Islamophobia was largely absent, except in Mr. Chabot’s (OH - Republican) speech that placed rape at the top of the list of crimes that ISIS commits, which, as already discussed, is not the most frequent crime that ISIS commits.

4. Orlando Night Club shooting of 2016

On June 12, 2016, Omar Mateen called 911 to proclaim allegiance to ISIS. He then used an assault rifle and pistol to kill 50 and wound 53 at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. The shooting began at 2 am. Using an assault rifle and pistol, Mateen killed 50 and wounded 53 at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando; while many people ran for the exit, some remained trapped inside during a three-hour standoff until a SWAT team and law enforcement raided the building and killed Mateen. (Alvarez and Perez-Piña 2016). The FBI had previously investigated Omar Mateen in 2013 and 2014 after comments to coworkers suggested ties and possible connections to Moner Mohammad Abusalha, an American who became a suicide bomber in Syria. The FBI states that they found no evidence that Mateen had a significant connection to terrorism, however, he was on at least one terrorist watch list (Alvarez and Perez-Piña 2016).

Congress was not in session the day of the attack; they were, however, very vocal in the days following. To complete the data, I compiled two weeks of articles from *The New York Times* on the speeches and statements given by political elites. The same theme appears in Congressional quotes and actions in *The New York Times* and congressional records. Democrats quickly honed in on the issue of gun violence in America, emphasizing that it was a hate crime against the LGBTQ+ community. Republicans, however, split; the majority voted against gun control measures and focused on immigration, but some did attempt bipartisan legislation.

At a rally on the anniversary of the Charleston shooting—just days after the Orlando attack—the Mayor of Charleston, South Carolina, and Robert Brown (SC - Democrat) cited gun control as a major issue, in addition to hate crimes and race relations. Their speeches focused on wanting to overturn the so-called “Charleston loophole,” which allows individuals on the terrorist watch list to purchase a gun after a three-day waiting period, whether a background check was completed or not (Dixon and Schwirtz 2016). This echoes democrat sentiments after

the Paris attack and the San Bernadino attack; at that time, democrats wanted to ensure that individuals on the terrorist watch list could not purchase firearms and explosives.

Legislation title	Who proposed	Description	Did it pass
Amendment to S. 2837	Mr. Murphy (CT – Democrat)	Stop people on terror watchlist from purchasing firearms and explosives	NO
S. 3058	Mr. Nelson (FL – Democrat)	NCIS database must keep track of individuals who is/has been under a federal terrorism investigation. if a licensed gun dealer requests a background check on an individual who is/has been under a federal terrorism investigation, then the NICS database must notify the FBI of the request and the pending firearm transfer	NO
S.Amdt. 4751	Mr. Grassley (IA – Republican)	Expand background checks, to address gun violence and improve the availability of records to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System	NO
Reintroduction of Feinstein amendment	Ms. Feinstein (CA - Democrat)	Introduced after San Bernadino, prevent anyone on the federal terrorism watch list and other terrorist databases from buying firearms or explosives.	

Four measures were put forth to the Senate on gun control and restrictions, mainly focused on the Charleston loophole (Lichtblau 2016; Herszenhorn “Senator’s 15-hour filibuster” 2016). These measures were voted on in part due to a fifteen-hour filibuster by Senator Christopher S. Murphy (CT - Democrat) (Herszenhorn “Senator’s 15-hour filibuster” 2016). During this filibuster, which began on Wednesday morning, Murphy and other democratic senators gave speeches on the prevalence of gun violence and the necessity for stricter gun control measures, namely background checks and barring suspected terrorists from purchasing weapons. The goal was to force the majority leader, Senator Mitch McConnell (KY -

Republican), to allow votes on amendments to an annual appropriations bill—in this case, on democrats’ amendments to the annual Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bill (S. 2837) which sought to tighten the nation’s gun laws (Herszenhorn “Senator’s 15-hour filibuster” 2016). Murphy emphasized that “almost every one of us has had a conversation with a family member who lost a son or daughter to gun violence” (Herszenhorn “Senator’s 15-hour filibuster” 2016). The filibuster ended after an agreement was reached between Mr. McConnell and Senator Harry Reid (NV - Democrat) to hold votes on two gun control amendments, although the measures did not pass (Herszenhorn “Senator’s 15-hour filibuster” 2016). In the House of Representatives, John Lewis led a sit-in on the floor of Congress to advocate for gun control legislation, but the Speaker of the House ended the 24-hour sit-in with a vote without debate. No gun control legislation was added (Fausset 2016).

Republicans did not favor this proposed amendment by Mr. Murphy, saying it was too broad; even Senator Jon Tester (MT - Democrat) voted against it (Steinhauer 2016). Senator Kelly Ayotte (NH - Republican) said the measures to prevent suspected terrorists from getting guns were inadequate but voted for both proposals (Steinhauer 2016). With the Orlando terrorist attack, democrats grew increasingly frustrated by their inability to pass laws that would make it harder for terrorists to get guns. Senator Harry Reid (NV - Democrat) remarked, “our constituents see a disturbing pattern of inaction. Sadly, our efforts are blocked by the republican Congress, who take their marching orders from the National Rifle Association” (Steinhauer 2016). Dianne Feinstein (CA - Democrat) was also frustrated, saying, “it’s time to stand up” and keep suspected terrorists from purchasing weapons (Steinhauer 2016). Surprisingly, some republicans agreed. Senator Mitch McConnell (KY - Republican) stated that “no one wants

terrorists to be able to buy guns or explosives,” but democrats and republicans were unable to draft a proposal that satisfied both sides (Steinhauer 2016).

After these measures were all voted down, Senator Susan Collins (ME - Republican) and Senator Heidi Heitkamp (ND - Democrat) created a gun control proposal intended to increase restrictions on gun ownership and reduce gun violence (Herszenhorn “Bipartisan senate group proposes” 2016). Their proposal would prohibit gun sales to suspected terrorists on the government’s no fly list or its selectee list (a smaller list than the federal terrorist watch list that the failed proposals were based on). In the words of Ms. Collins, “if you are too dangerous to fly on an airplane, you are too dangerous to buy a gun” (Herszenhorn “Bipartisan senate group proposes” 2016). The proposal would allow for an appeal by any citizen or green card holder blocked from purchasing, and it would award lawyer’s fees if their appeal was successful. Another provision was a requirement that federal and local law enforcement be notified if anyone who had been on the lists in the past five years attempts to purchase a weapon, which was meant to address the situation in the Orlando attack where Omar Mateen had been recently removed from one of the lists before he bought a weapon. Mitch McConnell (KY - Republican) supported the proposal, saying, “I’m going to be working to make sure she gets a vote on that proposal” (Herszenhorn “Bipartisan senate group proposes” 2016). Mr. Schumer (NY - Democrat) was hopeful, noting that it would “be the first time that in a bipartisan way, with significant republican support, the N.R.A. is told, ‘You’re way off-base’” (Herszenhorn “Bipartisan senate group proposes” 2016).

Other pieces of legislation were discussed after the attack. For example, California allocated \$5 million for public research on gun violence, with the goal of better policy recommendations to prevent gun violence (The Editorial Board 2016). Around the same time,

President Obama's order that would protect certain types of illegal immigrants from being deported was blocked by the Supreme Court. Immigration was a huge topic during this time, and it may have caused the xenophobia and Islamophobia that rose higher after the Orlando attack ("Low-priority immigrants" 2016). In this same vein, Representative Joaquín Castro (TX - Democrat) introduced legislation to remove the terms "alien" and "illegal immigrant" from federal code, saying, "these folks may not be American citizens, but they are not people from outer space. They are human beings" ("A fight over 'aliens'" 2016). Castro argued that the term is xenophobic, which ties into the discussion of Muslim immigrants and *Muslims cannot assimilate* Islamophobia ("A fight over 'aliens'" 2016).

Greg Evers (FL - Republican), a republican state senator who was running for United States Congress at the time, was holding a giveaway of an AR-15 to emphasize his pro-gun rights stance in the wake of the Orlando shooting. He said, "with the terrorist attacks that we have seen on our country, we are under a constant threat, and it's not going away." Mr. Evers explicitly labels the Orlando attack as terrorism, not as a hate crime or issue of gun violence, a clear difference between himself and his democrat counterparts ("Florida lawmaker wants to give away" 2016). Brian Burgess, a spokesman for Mr. Evers, said that the AR-15 giveaway was a response to President Obama's refusal to talk openly about radical Islam. Both men asserted that the government cannot be trusted, which is why they advocated for gun rights. Mr. Burgess stated, "when President Obama went down to Orlando, he made that event about a firearm. It's clear to folks in our district, and it's clear to Greg, that we can't depend on the federal government to identify the cause and root it out" ("Florida lawmaker wants to give away" 2016). In the same vein, Mr. Evers himself said that "we can no longer, I feel, count on our own government to protect us" ("Florida lawmaker wants to give away" 2016).

Other political elites weighed in as well. Presidential candidate Donald Trump had been advocating for a Muslim ban throughout his campaign, consequently, he made many statements after the Orlando attack. Firstly, he wrote on Twitter directly after the attack: “appreciate the congrats for being right on radical Islamic terrorism” (Martin 2016). In another statement, Trump declared, “I said this was going to happen — and it is only going to get worse,” arguing that Mrs. Clinton’s presidency would mean “hundreds of thousands” more Middle Eastern migrants, “and we will have no way to screen them, pay for them, or prevent the second generation from radicalizing” (Martin 2016). Dissecting this, Trump pins the blame for the terrorist attack on all Muslim immigrants. Again, Trump asserts, “we cannot continue to allow thousands upon thousands of people to pour into our country, many of whom have the same thought process as this savage killer,” propagating the idea that a large number of Muslim immigrants have terrorist intentions and displaying *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia and *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia (“Many what-ifs” 2016). He expressed concern that a single gunman carried out the Orlando massacre, so “can you imagine what they’ll do in large groups, which we’re allowing now to come here?” (Healy & Kaplan 2016). Again, this *Muslim men are terrorists* and *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia became the center point for Trump’s rhetoric. Trump also advocated for profiling of Muslims in order to prevent terrorist attacks, saying, “well I think profiling is something that we’re going to have to start thinking about as a country” (Mahler 2016). He also suggested that we “check, respectfully, the mosques” for terrorist activity (Burns & Kaplan 2016). And finally, Donald Trump accused American Muslims of failing to “turn in the people who they know are bad,” indicating that he believes all Muslims are complicit in terrorist attacks because they know which Muslims are terrorists, another example of *Muslim men are terrorists* (Martin & Burns 2016).

Other notable articles involved protests and events that happened during the same time period as the attack. One of the articles mentioned that Officer Masood Syed was suspended without pay during the month of Ramadan for refusing to shave his beard. The rule is that certain people are allowed to maintain a one-millimeter beard, but Officer Syed said he wore his beard at lengths between a half-inch and one inch without incident until 2015 (Southall 2016). He was even allowed to wear it in his official identification photo. He put in a request for reasonable accommodation for his Sunni Muslim faith, but before he had heard back from that request, he was repeatedly told to shave his beard. Eventually he was suspended for not shaving it (Southall 2016). The fact that this happened during the same time that the Orlando attack happened seems like more than a coincidence. There was also a white nationalist protest in Sacramento (“10 injured during white nationalist protest” 2016) and a protest by the Westboro Baptist Church at a vigil for the victims that involved shouting and signs with slurs (Turkewitz 2016). In a speech given after the attack, President Obama explained why he never used the label radical Islam, to the disdain of republican leaders. He said, “if we fall into the trap of painting all Muslims with a broad brush and imply that we are at war with an entire religion, then we are doing the terrorists’ work for them” (“Mr. Obama’s powerful words about terrorism” 2016).

In this case there was minimal discussion of Muslim women; however, a couple articles discussed Omar Mateen’s wife, Noor Zahi Salman. Police were investigating whether she was an active accomplice in the attack. Noor told the FBI that she drove Omar Mateen to the Pulse nightclub at some point and was with him when he bought ammunition (Apuzzo & Lichtblau 2016). She told agents that she tried to talk her husband out of an attack, and the Justice Department said it was not clear if she will face criminal charges (Blinder et. al. 2016). Agents interviewed Noor’s neighbors in Rodeo, California, who said she grew up in a Muslim household

where she and her sisters were not allowed to drive. They said Omar Mateen was a controlling husband who often prevented his wife from visiting her family (Apuzzo & Lichtblau 2016). Gathering from these statements and the reluctance to press criminal charges against Noor, it is most likely that they were working under the assumption that *Muslim women are oppressed* and therefore Noor was not an active participant in her husband's attack. While this may not be overt Islamophobia, it is worth noting as one of the few times a Muslim woman is mentioned after these attacks, and it is clear that they assumed she was a passive acceptor of repression.

In these *New York Times* articles, republicans fight more for immigration control or to keep gun control bills from passing, and democrats turn to gun control bills to solve the problem. Muslim women are not mentioned except for the discussion of Omar Mateen's wives, who are discussed as acceptors of Mateen's oppression.

5. London attack

On Saturday, June 3, 2017, three men rammed into pedestrians on the London Bridge. They got out of the van wearing fake suicide vests and walked to the market center where they attacked people with knives, shouting, "This is for Allah" ("London bridge attack: what" 2019). Police arrived on the scene and shot and killed the three attackers. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, which killed eight people and injured forty-eight ("London bridge attack: what" 2019). On their platform of choice, Telegram, members and supporters of ISIS shared a poster calling for supporters to attack others with guns, knives, and trucks during the month of Ramadan (Erlanger "Another terrorist attack" 2017). The three attackers were Khuram Shazad Butt, a British citizen born in Pakistan, Rachid Redouane, who had claimed to be Moroccan and Libyan, Youssef Zaghba, a Moroccan-Italian man. All three men lived near the area and were

self-radicalized. Congress was not in session on the two days following the attack, so I looked at two weeks of *New York Times* articles in order to understand the elite response.

One of the attackers, Khuram Shazad Butt, also known as Abs, was featured in a film about extremists. An article in the *New York Times* focused a lot of attention on how different and traditional his clothing was, displaying *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia. They also focused on his neighborliness and how connected he was to the community. Pulling quotes from neighbors on how nice he was, they hinted at the fact that any Muslim could be a terrorist, even your neighbor, displaying *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia (“London attack suspect” 2017). Additionally, another article focused on the clothing of Abs and his wife, referring to it as “traditional Muslim dress” and a “traditional headscarf” (Callimachi & Bennhold 2017). It is interesting that this is explicitly mentioned when it has no bearing on the story. Though a small detail, this focus on the “traditional” clothing and headscarf displays *Muslims are unable to assimilate* and *Muslim women are oppressed* Islamophobia. Because the weapons used were knives instead of guns, there was a notable lack of gun reform advocacy from democrats or liberal leaning reporters, breaking the trend that has shown up in the other case studies. The republicans and conservatives, however, stayed true to their pattern and called for immigration bans, or in extreme cases, internment camps.

What is interesting about this case is the perpetrators were all known or suspected to be involved in terrorist activities. Abs was in a documentary, and Mr. Zaghba was stopped in Italy when he was trying to travel to Syria to fight for ISIS. He told authorities that he was “going to be a terrorist,” but he was not arrested (Callimachi & Bennhold 2017). Because of this, many articles talked about how the three men should have been stopped, with many reporters blaming Theresa May.

Declaring “enough is enough,” Prime Minister Theresa May promised to conduct a sweeping review of Britain’s counterterrorism strategy, saying that the government must “intensify its counterterrorism efforts to deal with Islamist radicalism at home and to try to restrict ‘the safe spaces it needs to breed,’ both on the internet and in British communities.” She mentioned that she might extend the custodial sentencing of terrorist suspects and regulate media to combat extremism. In her words, “there is, to be frank, far too much tolerance of extremism in our country” (Erlanger “After London attack” 2017).

Multiple elites propagated Islamophobic rhetoric, mainly of the *Muslim men are terrorists* variety. Nigel Farage, a *Fox News* contributor, mentioned the idea of internment camps for UK Muslims following the London attack, which is not only a concerning reference to the Holocaust, but it is also an example of *Muslim men are terrorists* and *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia (Grynbaum 2017). Katie Hopkins of *The Daily Mail* also proposed a similar idea to round up Muslims on the terror watch list in the UK and place them in internment camps to prevent future attacks. Fox and Friends did formally denounce these statements, but this is another example of *Muslim men are terrorists* and *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia (Grynbaum 2017). *Breitbart* news editor Katie McHugh claimed she was fired for her anti-Muslim tweet that claimed, “there would be no deadly attacks in the U.K. if Muslims didn’t live there,” (Victor 2017; Grynbaum 2017). This is clearly an example of *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia.

Within the same week of the London attack, ISIS carried out a terrorist attack in Iran. The US State Department put out a statement: “the depravity of terrorism has no place in a peaceful, civilized world” (Erdbrink & Mashal 2017). Again, the danger of the dichotomy of civilized versus uncivilized paints Muslims as savages and other; the *Muslims are unable to assimilate*

Islamophobia is clear (Erdbrink & Mashal 2017). During this week, multiple Arab nations imposed sanctions on Qatar, and in an article discussing this, the UAE ambassador, Yousef al-Otaiba, was described as “a charismatic figure who speaks nearly native-sounding English” (Kirkpatrick & Frenkel 2017). While not overtly Islamophobic, this is a microaggression, hinting at the fact that *Muslims are unable to assimilate*. One article displays *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia by suggesting that Islam and liberalism are at odds with each other. Interestingly, the article was written by a man from Bangladesh (“Bangladesh puts lady justice in her place” 2017).

As mentioned before, republicans leaned towards immigration solutions. Notably, the president at the time, Donald Trump, promoted his travel ban. In his tweet, he stated, “people, the lawyers and the courts can call it whatever they want, but I am calling it what we need and what it is, a TRAVEL BAN!” (Liptak & Baker 2017). He said this travel ban would be imposed on “certain DANGEROUS countries,” and he suggested that anything short of a ban “won’t help us protect our people!” (Liptak & Baker 2017). During this time, his travel ban had been revised to take out the mention of religion in order to pass through the courts. The revised order barred all refugees from entering the country for 120 days and limited entry for 90 days for visitors from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. In Trump’s words, “EXTREME VETTING people coming into the U.S. in order to help keep our country safe” (Liptak & Baker 2017). However, in calling the revised order “politically correct” and “watered down” as he did in one of his tweets, Trump revealed that the goal of the travel ban was to ban travelers based on religion. Judging from his concern about safety, this is an example of *Muslim men are terrorists* Islamophobia (Liptak & Baker 2017). However, two courts ruled Trump's travel ban unconstitutional and overturned a previous court’s decision that the White House could not

investigate the vetting process and see if it needed to be revised (Liptak 2017). It is interesting that the President would turn to a travel ban when the terrorists in the London attack were homegrown and self-radicalized.

In a remarkable display of *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia, one article wrote, “to those Iranians shaking their hips and backsides to Latin American music during Zumba exercise classes, Iran’s Muslim clerics — and an American company — have the same message: Stop it. It’s illegal” (Erdbrink 2017). In a disrespectful description of Islam, the writer doubled down on the *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia, stating that “in their world, things like drinking alcohol, mixing between men and women, and dancing can lead to committing sins...so it has been decided that these temptations...are illegal” (Erdbrink 2017). Criticizing Iran for not practicing separation of church and state would be one thing, but this author describes “their world” as totally foreign and strange, as if Prohibition never happened.

After the terrorist attack, there was an incident of racially motivated, Islamophobic violence. A man in Portland, Oregon shouted slurs at two women, one in Muslim dress, and two people stepped in to help them. The men then stabbed these two people. Though there was no Islamophobic rhetoric present, it is worthwhile to mention this act of discrimination and harassment of a Muslim woman.

Again, the *Muslim women are oppressed* Islamophobia was rare, with only one instance in this case. However, multiple elites used *Muslim men are terrorists* and *Muslims are unable to assimilate* rhetoric in their reactions to the attack, and republicans pushed for immigration bans and even internment camps.

Conclusions

In this paper, I set out to answer the question: does a major terrorist attack cause an uptick in Islamophobic rhetoric? And is it different for Muslim women? I chose five case studies: Paris, San Bernadino, Orlando, Brussels, and London. Looking at the Congressional records or two weeks of *New York Times* articles, I took note of the instances of Islamophobia and the type, as well as the political party of the person when available.

Contrary to my hypothesis, I found that *Muslim women are oppressed* Islamophobia was rare. I did not find an uptick in that form of Islamophobia after a terrorist attack, even when the perpetrator was woman. In fact, I found that Muslim women were often left out of the discussion. They were not referred to, considered, or involved in the discussions of terrorism. Though *Muslim men are terrorists* and *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia is present and pervasive after a terrorist attack, both in rhetoric from elites and news articles from the *New York Times*, *Muslim women are oppressed* Islamophobia is rare.

Congress members and elites who used Islamophobic rhetoric consistently used it to stoke fear and justify restrictive policies. To do this, they focused on Muslim males as violent terrorists and immigrants bringing violence, both types which are more likely to obtain the fear response. Focusing on Muslim women being oppressed does not stoke the same fear, so it was not used as much. Interestingly, there was a partisan divide in the way that Islamophobia was used. Republicans focused on restrictive immigration policies, using Islamophobic rhetoric to justify intense scrutiny of citizens or potential citizens based on religion, or in some cases calling for a complete ban of Muslims and/or refugees from Muslim nations. Democrats used Islamophobic rhetoric to call for restrictions on gun sales and other weapon sales, as well as greater background checks. They mostly saw terrorist attacks as a result of easily accessible weapons, whereas Republicans believed radical Islam was to blame.

Due to the prevalence of the *Muslim men are terrorist* form of Islamophobia, a significant portion of the United States defines terrorism as violence by Muslims or foreigners. Because of this, the US has been slow to respond the new terrorist threat of right-wing extremism, which is mostly committed by US citizens. Groups such as the Proud Boys and other white nationalist groups use fear and violence to achieve a political goal. The January 6th riots of 2021 are an extreme, public example of this form of terrorism, where the Proud Boys and other citizens stormed the US capital, causing chaos and violence. They used violence and fear in hopes of keeping President Donald Trump in office.

The problem of Islamophobia is pervasive, affecting the way we treat Muslims and the way we respond to terrorist attacks of any kind. *Muslim men are terrorists* and *Muslims are unable to assimilate* Islamophobia are more prevalent than *Muslim women are oppressed*, but all are cause for concern. There needs to be an intentional effort to create policies to reduce Islamophobic attitudes in the United States.

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