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Muslim Victimization in the Contemporary US: Clarifying the Racialization Thesis

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Abstract
This article draws on in-depth, qualitative interviews with Muslim and non-Muslim Americans in 2016 to specify how Muslim "racialization" is shaped by the racial politics of the United States (US). Anti-Muslim bias is not experienced by religious Muslims as a whole, but by people whose bodies are read to be affiliated with the Islamic religion—often erroneously—because of their perceived racial characteristics. Self-identified black, white, and Hispanic Muslims with no visible markers of their religion do not experience anti-Muslim harassment, while non-Muslim Christians, Hindus, and Sikhs who embody an imagined "Muslim look," cope with fear and aggression from strangers on a daily basis. These findings are notable for two reasons. First, our respondents demonstrate how racialized religion is mutable: they are active in constructing how Islam is read on their bodies in public. Second, our findings demonstrate how hate crime categorization in the US obscures the role that racism plays in religious victimization. We urge scholars who study anti-Muslim acts to include non-Muslims in their analyses, and advocate for the re-conceptualization of identity-based hate crime categories. Excavating the *corporeality* of criminal victimization in particular can help to understand the ways in which biases are experienced in the contemporary US.

> *They could care less that I am calling myself a Muslim. All they look at is the dark skin. That is how I am judged. That is how we are all judged, as black people.*
>
> *– Joshua, black Muslim man*

> *I am perceived to an American as Muslim. If I walk down the street I'll get yelled at, "Hey, Bin Laden, how are you doing?" Or "Osama." And it will happen all the time.*
>
> *—Hari, (non-Muslim) Sikh man*

This article joins ongoing critical conversations about violence labeled "hate" or "bias" crime (Chakraborti 2010, 2015, 2016; Jacobs and Potter 1998; Mason 2014; McDevitt and Iwama 2016; McVeigh et al. 2003; Meyer 2014; Moran 2001). Drawing from in-depth, qualitative interviews with Muslim and non-Muslim Americans in 2016, we specify the

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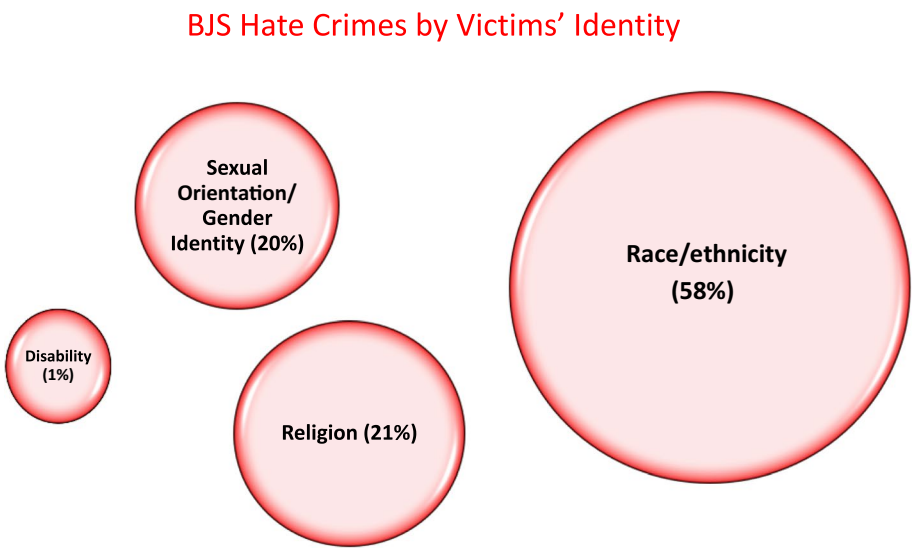

Fig. 1 BJS hate crimes by victims' identity

ways in which religious bias acts are "raced" in the current era. We find that self-identified black, white, and Hispanic Muslims do *not* experience anti-Muslim harassment, while non-Muslim Sikhs, Hindus, and Christians who are perceived to be Muslim regularly suffer such acts. These findings are notable for two reasons. First, our respondents demonstrate how racialized religion is mutable; Muslims and non-Muslims are active in constructing how Islam is read on their bodies in public. While critical criminologists have explored the ways in which race and gender performance impacts victimization (cf. Campbell 2005), religious performance has not been explored. Second, our findings show that state hate crime categories in the United States (US) obscure the role that race plays in religious victimization. This not only confuses the statistical portrait of hate victimization in the US, but also reifies the racial assumptions embedded in the symbolic "honor" of being protected by hate crime legislation. Instead, the corporeality of criminal victims (Spencer 2015) should be excavated in order to understand how bias is experienced in the contemporary US.

Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 summarize our argument. Figures 1 and 2 show how the US government conceptualizes hate crimes, while Figs. 3 and 4 offer our corrections. The US Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) organizes hate crimes in four major categories in Fig. 1. According to BJS data, the most common type of hate crime in the US in 2016 was motivated by the victim's race or ethnicity; second and third most common was victims' religion (21%) and sexual orientation/gender identity (20%), respectively, while a much smaller group was targeted because of disability.[1] This distribution is fairly consistent with data from the last decade, although the total number of hate crimes increased significantly each year in 2015, 2016, and 2017.[2]

[1] This is among what the FBI calls "single-category" bias incidents, or 6063 out of 6121. See the FBI's reports at: https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2016 and https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2016/topic-pages/victims.

[2] See Masucci and Langton (2017) for more detail on hate crimes from 2004 to 2015.

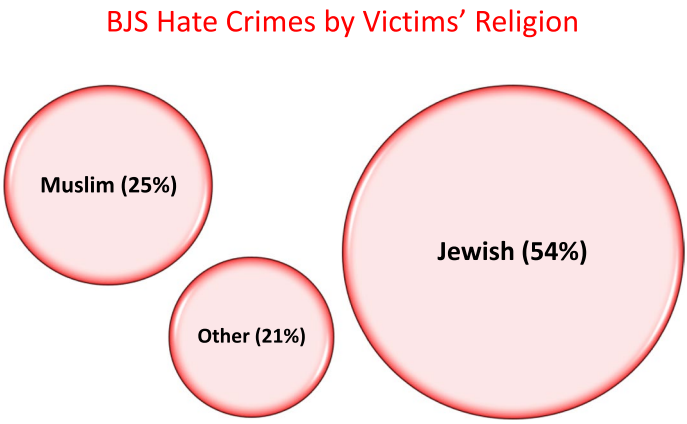

Fig. 2 BJS hate crimes by victims' religion

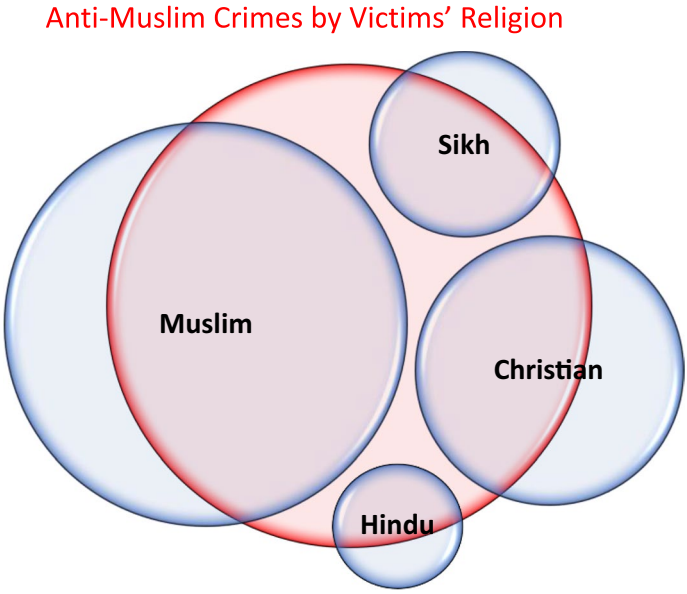

Fig. 3 Anti-Muslim crimes by victims' religion

Figure 2 focuses on the victims of religiously-motivated hate crimes, this article's topic. According to the BJS, Jews were targets of religious hate crimes more than any other religious group in 2016 (54% of religious hate crimes), followed by Muslims (25% of religious hate crimes), and then all other religions. This, too, is consistent with data from the past

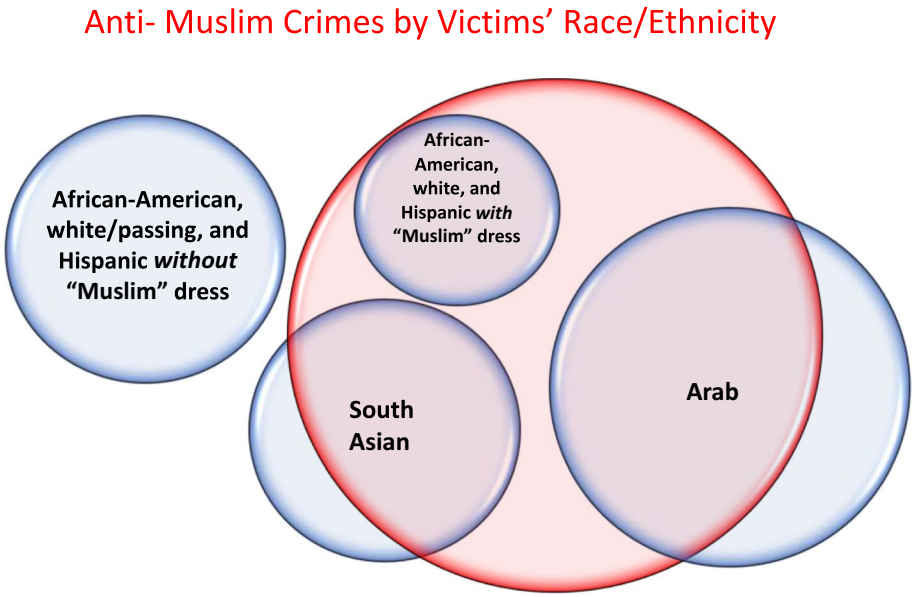

Fig. 4 Anti-Muslim crimes by victims' race/ethnicity

decade, though anti-Muslim crime has increased proportionately more than crime against other religious groups each year since 2014 (Kishi 2017; Levin 2018).

Our data problematize the above two figures. While many have acknowledged that federal hate crime statistics are not reliable in terms of sheer numbers (including the BJS itself[3]), our data suggest additional problems. First, "Muslim hate crimes" are not committed against religious Muslims as a whole. As other studies have shown, anti-Muslim acts in the twenty-first century US are committed against a group of people who are religiously Muslim, Sikh, Christian and Hindu (Cainkar 2009; Cainkar and Maira 2005; CAIR 2017; Jamal and Naber 2008; Joshi 2006; Love 2017; Meer 2013; Meer and Modood 2010; Rana 2011; Selod and Embrick 2013; Singh 2002; Singh et al. 2013; Verma 2006; Zainiddinov 2016; Zopf 2017). This is represented in Fig. 3.

But because bias against Muslims is also "racialized" (Bayoumi 2006; Cainkar and Selod 2018; Chen 2010; Considine 2017; Elver 2012; Garner and Selod 2015; Love 2017; Meer and Modood 2010; Selod 2015; Selod and Embrick 2013), this group ("Muslim hate crimes") can be further specified, demonstrating another problem with the BJS categories. First, "race" and "religious" bias crimes are not so easily distinguished, making the categorization scheme itself misleading. Second, the Muslim, Sikh, Christian and Hindu Americans who are targets of anti-Muslim violence, experience anti-Muslim bias in the public sphere in a variety of ways. According to our interviewees, their racial-religious identities are both *performed* using changing, conscious strategies on a daily basis, and *interpreted* through the "gaze" of those with whom they interact. The interactions that result, in turn, influence whether or not they will be targeted as Muslim. This article joins with others in suggesting that the historical ethno-racial arrangements in the US must be taken into

[3] See the 2015 report at https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/press/hcv0415pr.cfm.

account to specify how racialization shapes anti-Muslim acts in the twenty-first century (Cainkar and Selod 2018, Love 2017). Figure 4 shows the group of people who experience anti-Muslim acts, according to our research. This group identifies racially as "Arab" and as "South Asian," but is also composed of white, black, and Hispanic Americans who are perceived to be wearing Islamic "dress." White, black, and Hispanic Muslims who do *not* wear markers of their religion notably do *not* experience discrimination.

Though our respondent group is small and our research should be considered preliminary, it has two important implications for critical criminologists. First, those who study hate crimes should be cautious about conducting research on identity-based violence using populations defined by pre-articulated categories; instead, identity should be treated as something to be constructed, with data gathered from a broad population rather than "sampling on the dependent variable," as sociologists say.[4] Second, we argue that by disseminating uncritically statistics about "Muslim" hate crimes, criminologists obscure the long history of state-sponsored racism that is complicit with those who suppose that they can *read* religion on the bodies of those whom they encounter. The 3.5 million Muslims who live in the United States describe themselves as white (30%), black (23%), Asian (21%), Hispanic (6%), and other or mixed race (19%) (Mohamed 2016, 2018). Despite this diversity, a homogenous racial imaginary surrounds Islam, conflating Muslims with the "Arab terrorist" category that consolidated after 9/11. This imaginary is known to Muslim and "Muslim-looking" Americans, and it is actively manipulated according to our interviewees' goals and beliefs. Black, white, and Hispanic Americans fall outside of this imaginary—their racial identity either criminalized—in the case of black respondents—or privileged in the case of respondents who identify as white. Critical victimologists interested in the contemporary US should attend to the intersection of embodied racial and religious positions in the context of not only the post-9/11 history, but also in the longer history of black/white racialization.

Muslim Hate in the Age of Trump

On November 8, 2016, Donald J. Trump became the 45th President of the United States after running a campaign that, among other things, encouraged anti-Muslim sentiment. He said, "I think Islam hates us" and called for "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States" (Johnson and Hauslohner 2017). In the months following Trump's election, bias incidents of all types spiked, including those against Muslims. The Southern Poverty Law Center documented nearly 900 bias incidents in one week, reporting that they were different in quality, as well as quantity, from those documented before Trump's election. One target of bias described the incidents as more aggressive and less "ashamed" than ever before (Miller and Werner-Winslow 2016).

Although Trump's rhetoric brought the discussion about Muslims in America to the forefront of political discourse, anti-Muslim sentiment is by no means new in the US. Religious Jews and Muslims have a long history of outsider status in the Christian world, going back at least as far as fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spain

[4] Commonly defined as selecting a group to study because the participants meet particular criteria and then using the findings as evidence for the criteria (King et al. 1994).

(Fredrickson 2002; Rana 2011). Any exploration the topic of Americans' positions on Islam must also acknowledge the complex histories of European colonialism and US-led imperialism in Arab homelands (Naber 2008). Edward Said (1978) first documented how the colonial "gaze" created a false idea of the "Oriental" population it encountered in its nineteenth-century Asian incursions. This gaze homogenized disparate foreign cultures as singularly passive, exotic and inferior. In the late twentieth century, ideas about Muslims were further complicated by the Arab–Israeli geopolitical conflict, which had the effect of conflating "Arab" with "danger" in mainstream US discourse, and sometimes conflating people of Arab descent with people of "Muslim" faith (Cainkar 2009; Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2003). The American response to 9/11 further complicated this, helping to bring to the mainstream the idea that the *religion of Islam itself* is dangerous. Even before that, Samuel Huntington's (1993) thesis posited that the global conflict of the twenty-first century would be structured by a fundamental incompatibility between the cultures of the "West" and the "non-West"—what he called the "clash of civilizations." The mainstream media largely ignored these types of arguments until after 9/11, when the organizations who had been espousing anti-Islamic rhetoric caught the attention of the media. By 2005, this "fringe" discourse had achieved mainstream circulation (Bail 2015). The term "Islamophobia" gained popular usage in the West during this period, marking the entrance of a specific type of "fear" of Islam into public discourse (Allen 2010).

In the twenty-first century, *Muslim* has become synonymous with *terrorism* in media (Altheide 2006), political (Harvey 2003; Welch 2004), and public discourse in the US (Alsultany 2013; Welch 2006). Situating the Islamic religion as dangerous to Western values is impossibly essentialist, requiring the homogenization of 1.6 billion people spread out across all regions of the globe and belonging to dozens of different sects and schools of theology, but it performs the work of supporting an old colonialist narrative obscuring the everyday violence of Western imperial nations (Asad 2007; Tuastad 2003; Turner and Nasir 2013) and, as such, has many iterations. One effect of this particular strain of Islamophobia is that people who are imagined to be Muslim are harassed daily, impacting those who "look" Muslim, rather than an actual religious group. Shortly after 9/11, a reporter described what she called a "Muslim look" to describe the young men in their twenties or thirties from Egypt, Pakistan, or Saudi Arabia who were being profiled as suspected terrorists (Davis 2001). In the more than 15 years since, people targeted as Muslim have included Sikhs (Ahluwalia and Pellettiere 2010; Joshi 2006; Singh 2002; Singh et al. 2013; Verma 2006), Arabs (Cainkar 2009; Cainkar and Maira 2005; Jamal and Naber 2008), and others perceived to be "Middle Eastern" (Love 2017; Welch 2006). Scholars frame the targeting of people perceived as Muslim to be the "racialization of religion"—a process by which a group of religious people become associated with phenotypical and cultural characteristics that are deemed unchanging and hereditary (Bayoumi 2006; Cainkar and Selod 2018; Chen 2010; Considine 2017; Elver 2012; Garner and Selod 2015; Love 2017; Meer and Modood 2010; Rana 2011; Selod 2015; Selod and Embrick 2013; Singh 2002; Singh et al. 2013; Verma 2006; Zainiddinov 2016; Zopf 2017). This has been described as part of a longer history of the racialization of non-white groups in the modern West (Omi and Winant 1994). According to the racialization of religion thesis, Muslims might be considered to be one of a group of "collective blacks" (Bonilla-Silva 2015), surveilled in much the same way blacks have been (Browne 2015). Our research suggests that this would be too broad a generalization—that Muslims of some ethno-racial groups are treated as

potential terrorists to be surveilled, but that others are invisible as Muslims, either because of their white racial privilege or because those perceived to be black are not imagined to be part of a "foreign" religious group. This is notably different from the experience of black Muslims in Western Europe, where Islam is associated with immigration from, among other places, northern Africa (Mythen et al. 2008). As such, we join with recent scholars who have called for clarification of the intersectional processes that "mark" a person Muslim in the public eye (Cainkar and Selod 2018).

Our data show that hate crime statistics *erase* how racial prejudices inform religious victimization. Anti-Muslim acts are not suffered by religious Muslims as a whole, but by people whose bodies are read in public to be affiliated with Islam because of their perceived racial characteristics. Joining with other scholars in critical victimology (Mawby and Walklate 1994; Spencer and Walklate 2016; Walklate 2006), we demonstrate that state definitions of victimization not only differ from the ways in which people experience it, but also reify the categories that enable a racialized culture of control.

Drawing on Butler (1990), theories of racial performance examine how individuals actively bring their "race into being" (Peek 2005). Racial identities—as all aspects of the presentation of self (Goffman 1963)—are produced actively in everyday activities. Choices of clothing, language, and posture are implicated in this construction. For people perceived as Muslim, decisions about shaving one's facial hair, wearing a turban or hijab, or altering an accent can have implications for their perceived racial identity (Patel 2005). Race, in this sense, is not a static identity, but a continual process of negotiation and performance. This also complicates the notion of racial "passing." While racial minorities have historically used "passing" as a mode of protection (cf. Sanchez and Schlossberg 2001), some of our respondents "pass" due to the overlay of a *more* stigmatized identity: their blackness renders them *in*visible as Muslims in this sense. New scholarship in the sociology of religion interrogates how religious identities, too, are performed (Mellor and Schilling 2010), but critical victimology has yet to take up the question of *how* performed religious identities impact bias acts. As such, the case of Muslim hate crime in the United States intensifies the need to study the corporeality of victimization—the "embodied preconditions of agency" as Spencer (2015) says—as opposed to the identity categories supplied by the state.

Research Methods

From May through September, during the presidential election season of 2016, the authors and five collaborators interviewed Americans in a major Southwest city about the candidates' stated positions on Muslims and Islam. Like Abrams and colleagues (2004), we were interested in capturing the way that meaning is created as important events unfold, recording "culture on the street" before positions become ossified in policy (2004: 194, citing Williams 1977). We wanted to understand *if and how* respondents were engaging with the presidential candidates' declarations about the religion of Islam and Muslim people. Using a semi-structured, open-ended approach common to qualitative sociological interviewing that aims to develop respondent-centered data (Weiss 1995), we tracked how meaning is created, rather than imposing meaning ourselves. We asked all respondents questions about four general topics: (1) What have you heard about Islam during the presidential campaign? (2) Does this conversation remind you of others

in history? (3) How did you form your ideas about Islam? (4) Have you ever experienced fear around these issues? We did not ask specifically about hate crimes or experiences with discriminatory incidents, but many respondents offered experiences with these in the course of the interviews.

Our aim was to capture the full spectrum of possible responses to the candidates' talk about Islam. To build our respondent pool, we used theory-driven purposeful sampling (Patton 2002). Previous literature suggests that in the US, religion and political affiliation affect opinions of Islam (Pew 2014, 2016). Therefore, our primary sampling goal was to ensure that a wide range of religious affiliations was represented, while also paying attention to political affiliation. Over the course of 4 months, we conducted thirty focus groups with a total of 89 people, and interviewed 83 people individually. In total, 172 people participated in our research. We collected basic demographic data from respondents in order to assure a diversity of age, ethnicity, political affiliations, race and socioeconomic positions. As such, any racial identifications we use in this article were supplied by respondents themselves. All interview and focus groups were recorded and transcribed professionally, which we then coded using NVIVO software for qualitative analysis.[5]

For this article, data from 33 respondents were analyzed. These included participants who identified as Muslim (26), Sikh (4), Christian (2), and Hindu (1), and who described themselves as having been victims of anti-Muslim biases. The respondents in this group ranged in age from nineteen to over 80 years-old, and included seventeen women and sixteen men.

Findings: Experiencing Hate

This section presents findings from the 33 respondents in our study who identified as Muslim and/or described experiencing anti-Muslim bias. Twenty-three of these told interviewers that they were targets of anti-Muslim acts, while six Muslims said they had never been targets of anti-Muslim sentiment in public, and four did not volunteer any information about their experiences one way or another. These findings are captured in Fig. 5.

As interviewers sat in people's homes, coffee shops, and religious institutions, we heard the stories of harassment from those who practice the Muslim faith and others who were only believed to be Muslim by strangers. Some of the stories left the respondent emotionally scarred, while others told their stories as ordinary, factual incidents. All, however, described the ways in which their physical form was read in public spaces. We take these bodily experiences "as a site of truth" (Spencer 2015: 37) in understanding anti-Muslim victimization.

We present our findings in three parts. First, we introduce respondents who experience their vulnerability as *inevitable* by nature of their religious embodiment: Sikhs wearing

[5] We used small focus groups and one-on-one interviews typical of a mixed-methods study, ranging from 40 minutes to over two hours. In one-on-one interviews, we emphasized life history narratives in order to understand the development of respondents' beliefs and experiences. In focus groups, we were able to develop group knowledge in an attempt to observe the dynamic built among participants (Wilkinson 1999). We employed a "mini" focus group methodology (Morgan 1997), with two to five people from shared social groups, so that participants would be "highly involved" both with one another and with the interview material.

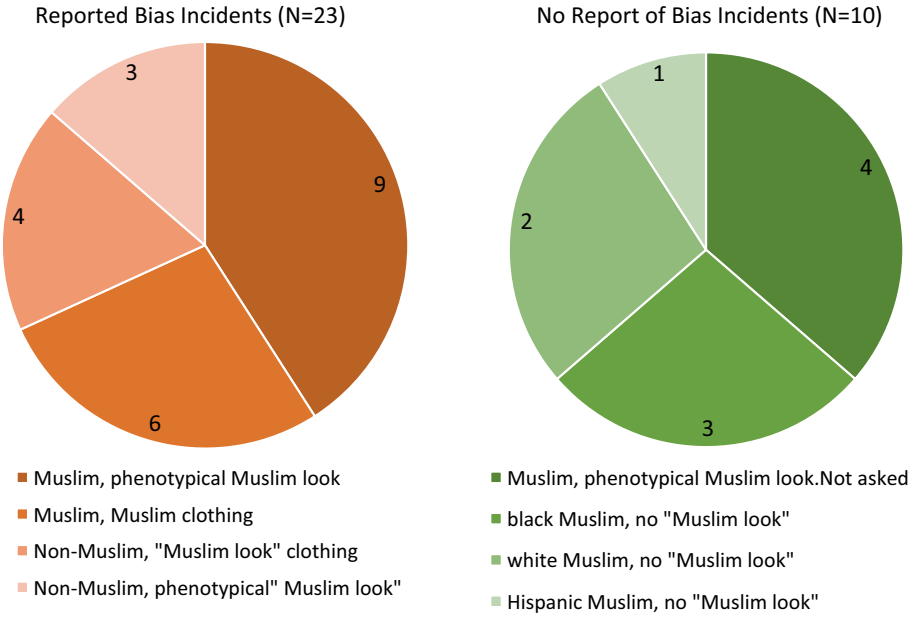

Fig. 5 Interviewees' experiences with anti-Muslim incidents (N = 33)

turbans (4) and Muslim women who wear hijabs (6) describe the most consistent and harrowing experiences. For this group, embodiment is not a choice to be negotiated, but prescribed by their religious faith. Second, we discuss 13 other men and women who consciously alter their phenotypical Muslim "look" as a method of negotiating anti-Muslim prejudice. We then turn to the accounts of the six "invisible" Muslim respondents who reported no experience with public acts of bias, focusing on their explanations about racial performance.

Immutable Bodies

Out of the 23 respondents who described experiencing anti-Muslim acts in public spaces, ten spoke of the presentation of their religious identity as immutable. For this group—the six hijabi women and four Sikh respondents—the act of covering their heads was non-negotiable. This marker of faith—the head covering—notably erased racial and religious privilege. Self-described white, brown, and black women were targets of anti-Muslim acts in public because of their hijabs; and turban-wearing Sikhs, though most closely related to the Hindu religion, were targeted as potential Muslim terrorists.

Claire is a white woman in her forties who converted to Islam. Putting on the "scarf," she explained, was a serious undertaking for her, but one that she could not delay once she felt herself to be "truly" Muslim. Claire explained: "I didn't wear a scarf because I knew it was going to be a challenge, that going to Walmart would be a challenge, going to work … and my family." But once she felt "confident" as a Muslim, she had to wear the scarf. The

consequences were as bad as she imagined. Her brothers and sisters taunted her mercilessly during family gatherings. Claire recounted what they said about her:

> 'She became part of a terrorist group. She's a Muslim terrorist. She joined a cult. We've got to watch out because she might have a bomb in her car.' Things like this. 'She may have a bomb or a machete under her scarf. Watch out. She might have a machete under there. Here comes the rag-head.' Very painful things.

Claire also lost her job because the manager disapproved of her "new appearance." She accused Claire of taking too many breaks to "cool down" from it. Rather than consider taking off the hijab, however, Claire considered it "God's way" of getting her away from an unholy place. Claire also said that the 2016 presidential election heightened her fear of public spaces, making her wonder if someone would "shoot up" her home or run her off the road while she was driving. Claire was especially attuned to changes in her level of fear because she had experienced a significant amount of her life without it. Growing up as a white Christian woman, she understood that her choice to wear the hijab on a regular basis removed her ability to perform whiteness (Smith 2014) in a way that protected her.

Another hijabi respondent was a spokesperson for a Muslim organization, which put her in the public eye. As a "visible" Muslim, Fatima said, her daily routines included precautions against physical and verbal attacks. She was late to meet for our interview because she was checking her surroundings, parking and walking onto a college campus in the middle of a weekday:

> I take precautions. Like right now, I was sitting in the car. I didn't see anybody. A couple of times, I went back. I parked again. Then, I drove over there. I didn't see anybody. I'm not on time even though there is no threat here.

Though she acknowledged there was "no threat" on the campus, Fatima completed her usual routine of parking and re-parking, checking and re-checking to prevent against any potential attacker that might be following her. Fatima said that the experience of being targeted in public had increased in the years after 9/11, but had also become more frequent during the 2016 presidential campaign. Fatima described her role as a "visible" Muslim as a choice grounded in a desire to help her community. She lives every day with verbal threats and "unbelievable" looks from those who would wish her harm, she said. But because of the heightened bias against Muslims, she is determined to be a role model to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. As she said, she has to wear the hijab now more than ever.

Sayeeda, a black Muslim woman in her twenties, described how everyday events can become the site of potential violence not because of her phenotypical appearance, but because of her hijab. She was in the "most diverse Walmart on Earth" with her sister when a man behind her in the checkout line picked up his phone. He began talking loudly about terrorists, making clear she and her sister were meant to hear. Sayeeda heard him say:

> 'We should just kill all of them. We just need to go over there and just have a big bomb and kill them all.' … I'm like oh my God should I say something. Then my sister, she's like: 'No, no don't say anything. What if he tries to do something?'

Her sister urged her to keep quiet and leave, although she wanted to speak up. Not only did this display make her feel threatened, she said, but she also felt silenced. For Claire, Fatima, and Sayeeda and other women we interviewed, the hijab is part of their identity, an expression of their faith rather than a choice to be made on a daily basis. In this way, the hijab

shares characteristics typically associated with a racial identity: it is written on the body, inseparable from its wearer.

These women's experiences are similar to the group of four turban-wearing Sikhs we interviewed. Like Muslim women who wear a hijab, this group recounted consistently harrowing occurrences in public spaces. Hari, the man quoted at the beginning of this article, discussed how people hurl anti-Muslim insults at him when he is walking down the street. This anti-Muslim hatred is normal for him, he explained, and that it happens "all the time." Ahmed, another Sikh man who is in his forties, describes the animus that goes along with being read as a Muslim:

> Often times I've heard, 'Hey terrorist, get out of our country.' It's the underlying assumption that people have, 'You must be Muslim and you must be bad.'

Despite this misrecognition, none of our Sikh interviewees considered removing the turban. One told us that his move to the United States and subsequent harassment made him research why he wore a turban. Amar said that the negative attention he received made him seek answers to why he was required to wear it. Based on his readings, Amar concluded: "I'm a Sikh, which means I'm a prince. That's why I wear a turban." Amar believed that his religious identity meant that he should embody royalty and wear a crown of sorts. He did not consider taking it off again.

Although traditionally defined in terms of phenotype, scholars recognize that mode of dress is increasingly considered part of the process of racialization. For Muslims and Sikhs, in particular, unfamiliar modes of dress mark their owners as foreign and non-white in the United States (Joshi 2006; Meer and Modood 2010; Rana 2011; Selod and Embrick 2013; Zopf 2017). Despite the risks, this group of respondents described the markers of their faith as expressions of their dedication.

Alterable Identities

Others in our group of interviewees offered their experiences with discrimination as "every day," but also within some realm of their control. Michael, a Muslim Middle Eastern man in his twenties, described his ongoing decisions about whether or not to shave his beard. As a self-described "brown" man, people in Michael's life push him to shave his beard in order to obscure his "Muslim look." He explained:

> When I video call my mom and I have a big beard she gets scared a lot: 'You have to shave your beard. Shave your beard!' Sometimes people make jokes between us like, 'Come on shave your beard. People will think you are a terrorist!'

This is not a "joke" Michael appreciates. The decision to shave—a grooming decision usually left to oneself—invites comments from his mother and friends, but it is also one that has real and potentially serious consequences for him. He considers how "safe" he feels in a given situation and alters his appearance accordingly.

Saleem, a young man whose parents emigrated from Pakistan, also alters the way he embodies his religion. When he was younger, he told us, strangers were "either suspicious or they're extra nice." He remembered negotiating hostility, on the one hand, and curiosity, on the other. After 9/11, especially, Saleem said, he lived with a constant threat of violence. Though he himself had never been beaten up—a result of his large size, he speculated—he said that as a Muslim, "You always hear about [other Muslims] getting beat up." This put him on edge constantly, even for the "day-to-day stuff." He was aware of how strangers

talk to him when dining in a restaurant or walking down the street. He became attuned to "a little difference in tone" giving him "this little pinching feeling on the back of [his] neck" that he had to be prepared to defend himself. Like Sayeeda's sister, Saleem's parents warned him not to bring attention to himself but to keep quiet in order to stay safe. Unlike Sayeeda, however, he found it too difficult to live with constant restraint and became an activist, requiring a type of Muslim embodiment similar to that described by Fatima—that of a "professional Muslim," as he called it. Though he did not question whether to shave his beard like Michael, he made different adjustments in public, maintaining his body as a receptacle for non-Muslim's queries. Saleem describes the energy it takes to gain control of dialogues about Muslims in the company of non-Muslims. Whether he is giving a formal talk or just meeting new people in his work, he works against being perceived as the stereotypical angry, violent Muslim. To his discomfort, he described, he allows others to direct questions and set agendas in order to perform the role of a good "representative" of his religion. To some degree, Michael and Saleem experience their racialized religious identity as mutable. They change their bodily habits to accommodate the negative perceptions of Islam, performing different type of work than that described by the turban and hijab-wearing respondents. This, they hope, will stave off potential attacks.

Invisible Muslims

There is limited research about Muslims who do *not* experience anti-Islamic bias in public. Six Muslims we interviewed fit this category. They identified as black (3), white (2), and Hispanic (1); none wore material markers of their faith, such as a hijab or kurta. For some of this group, this racial "passing" is a privilege. For others, it is part of a different experience of discrimination.

Emir identifies as a white, Muslim man. He describes how white Muslims are able to enjoy the privileges associated with whiteness if they do not "look Muslim." Emir is aware of the fact that he is not read as Muslim and how this reality is not only connected to race, but also gender. He explains:

> No one can tell I'm a Muslim from the outside view. But when it comes to the ladies, my wife she has the headscarf … when you go to a shopping center, you see that people they are looking. You can see the fear in their face. It's totally different when I talk to a seller, or my wife, she talks with them.

Emir does not have any physical signifiers of his Muslim faith. As a white man, he says he is able to pass as non-Muslim and avoid anti-Muslim bias. Emir's wife, however, cannot. As he describes, her hijab causes them to be greeted with fear. This confirms others' findings that the Muslim racialization is gendered (cf. Selod 2018; Williams and Vashi 2007).

Emir's experience is different from that of the three black Muslim men we interviewed. Joshua, quoted in this article's introduction, faces discrimination constantly, but not because he is Muslim. As he described, strangers "could care less if he is Muslim." He was raised a Christian, but converted to Islam as a young adult. For Joshua, becoming a member of the Nation of Islam meant a tremendous change in the way that he carried himself and thought of himself. Being a Muslim meant that he had to "clean up" inside and out. But in public spaces in the US, that transformation was invisible to those who saw him only as black. As an African-American man born and raised in the US, Joshua says he is read first and foremost as a different type of dangerous body, despite the fact that he is a middle-aged professional. He describes constant treatment as a "criminalblackman,"

Russell-Brown's (1998) term for the merging of the black male and criminal identities of the mass incarceration era. For Joshua, negotiating public space through the eyes of people who might fear him is part of his everyday behavior—a *habitus* that is decades old. This was brought into vast relief when he began to travel the world as a member of the US military:

> It is funny because we are accepted more overseas as black people than we are here in the United States. Whether I am a Muslim or Christian or not. I can go to England, Spain, Paris, whatever and get way more respect no matter what my religion is, there than I do right here in the country that I was born in, the country that I served in the military in.

Joshua fears for his safety as a black man in the US, he explains, but not as a Muslim. Further, this fear is grounded specifically in the country he grew up in; it dissipates somewhat when he travels.

Amar, another black Muslim man, is from Nigeria and has an accent when he speaks English. He described how these aspects of his identity often prompted strangers to ask where he is from. His African heritage does not perturb people he comes into contact with, he explained. But when he mentions his religion, listeners are shocked: "At some point in time they find out I'm Muslim and they're kind of shocked because they have this image in their heads of what a Muslim should look like… the Saudi look with the beard." As Amar understands it, Africans and African-Americans in the US do not embody the "Muslim look" the way "the Saudi look with a beard" does. Ironically, Americans treat these black men with racialized assumptions that obscure any potential bias towards their religion. Their religious affiliation is "invisible" in this sense, hidden behind prejudices of another sort.

Conclusion

The targets of anti-Muslim violence in the post-9/11 US have been a poorly defined group (Cainkar and Selod 2018; Love 2017). Our research shows that this group is composed of people from at least four religious faiths and is shaped by the way identity is performed and perceived. Muslims and non-Muslims are aware of the "Muslim imaginary" that shapes the ways strangers gaze upon them. For some, the way that they embody their religion is not a choice to be made on a daily basis. For this group, they will be either targeted or made invisible as Muslims on a consistent basis. Others take the racialized gaze into their own hands. Whether shaving a beard or adopting the posture of a "professional" Muslim—this group of people predict that their corporeal expression will change the way that they are targeted. Arabs and South Asians are most likely to be targeted for anti-Islamic harassment regardless of their religious faith, as is anyone wearing what is perceived to be Islamic head coverings. This especially impacts women who wear hijabs in the US, as others have confirmed see, e.g., Selod 2018; and Williams and Vashi 2007). Our research also suggests that white, Hispanic, and black Muslims with no perceived "Muslim" clothing are less likely to experience anti-Muslim harassment in the contemporary US. In order to be confirmed, this research should be replicated on a larger scale. It is also important to compare these findings with evidence from the EU, where Muslim racialization acts differently. In Scotland, for example, black youth report that they are regularly mistaken for being

Muslim (Hopkins 2017). Such comparisons can help flesh out how religious victimization is embedded in a longer history of colonial and imperial racial contexts.

Our findings support others who are increasingly convinced that identity-based hate crime categories are inadequate in the US. Victims of hate crimes—like everyone else—carry multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities. Scholars, drawing on Crenshaw's (1991) concept of intersectionality, have argued that hate crime categorization should emphasize a concern for generally "vulnerable" populations rather than single-category identities, such as race or sexual preference (Chakraborti 2010, 2015, 2016; Chakraborti and Garland 2004; Garland 2010, 2012; Mason-Bish 2014; Meyer 2010). We join with critical victimologists who suggest that the *corporeality* or embodied experiences of victims should be the starting point of any such inquiry. Data should be gathered from a general population in order to understand how the identities of those who experience bias crimes are constructed intersectionally and inter-directionally, including the "gaze" of those who commit violence. This means non-Muslims should be incorporated into studies of anti-Muslim victimization, and there should be an investigation of whether the categories of "race" and "religion" are meaningfully distinct for those who would commit anti-Muslim acts, for example.

Critical criminologists should take seriously the damage done by statistical categories that separate racial from anti-Muslim bias acts. This false duality fails to acknowledge the racial animus that animates anti-Muslim crimes. By obscuring the racial prejudices that shape anti-Muslim victimization, the BJS reifies the notion that Muslims can be *seen* and *targeted,* thus participating in the false homogenization of a diverse religious faith. As such, BJS hate crime statistics are part of the state's interpellation (Althusser 1971) or production of identities that most benefit the state. Failing to acknowledge that Muslims do not look like the racially-specific group of people who are targeted by anti-Muslim hatred lends credence to the imagined, racialized enemy in the War on Terror—part of the longer history of state-sponsored racism (Ahmed 2012; Haney-Lopez 1996). It is especially important that criminologists interrupt this interpellation in the emboldened racial animus of the Trump era.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no additional conflict of interest.

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