

Empowerment and Challenges Related to Identifying as Muslim

Salma Hassan

Culture and Emotion Lab, Psychology Department, Wesleyan University
Advisor: Patricia M. Rodriguez Mosquera



Introduction

- Past research has shown that since 9/11, Islamophobia in the U.S has increased and influenced Muslim people's feelings of safety, emotional wellness, and psychological well-being. (Rodriguez Mosquera, Khan, & Selya, 2013)
- This study contributes to the scarce research literature on Muslims' experiences and perspectives in psychology by recognizing both the unfair treatment of Muslims in the U.S as well as how the Muslim identity can be a source of empowerment.
- In this research, we assess how Muslims in the U.S believe they and their religious in-group are perceived, the challenges they face and their emotional effects, how religious practice can play a role in coping, and how community can serve as a support system.
- Additionally, our study acknowledges that each individual in the community may be impacted by other aspects of their intersectional identities.
- This poster presents results on two key questions in this research: what are U.S. Muslims' worries and concerns? And how do Muslims feel about their religious identity whilst living in U.S society?

Methods

Sample and data collection procedure:

- 175 participants who identified as Muslim participated in the study (93 women, 80 men, 1 gender non-binary, 1 trans man). Participants' average age was 33.01 years old ($SD = 11.97$). The majority of participants (82%) were born in the U.S. The sample reflected the cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity of U.S. Muslims. Results are based on the 175 participants; data collection is still ongoing.
- For data collection, we partnered with Cloud Research (www.cloudresearch.com), a participant-sourcing platform for online research and surveys. All participants received informed consent, a debriefing form, and were paid for the participation.

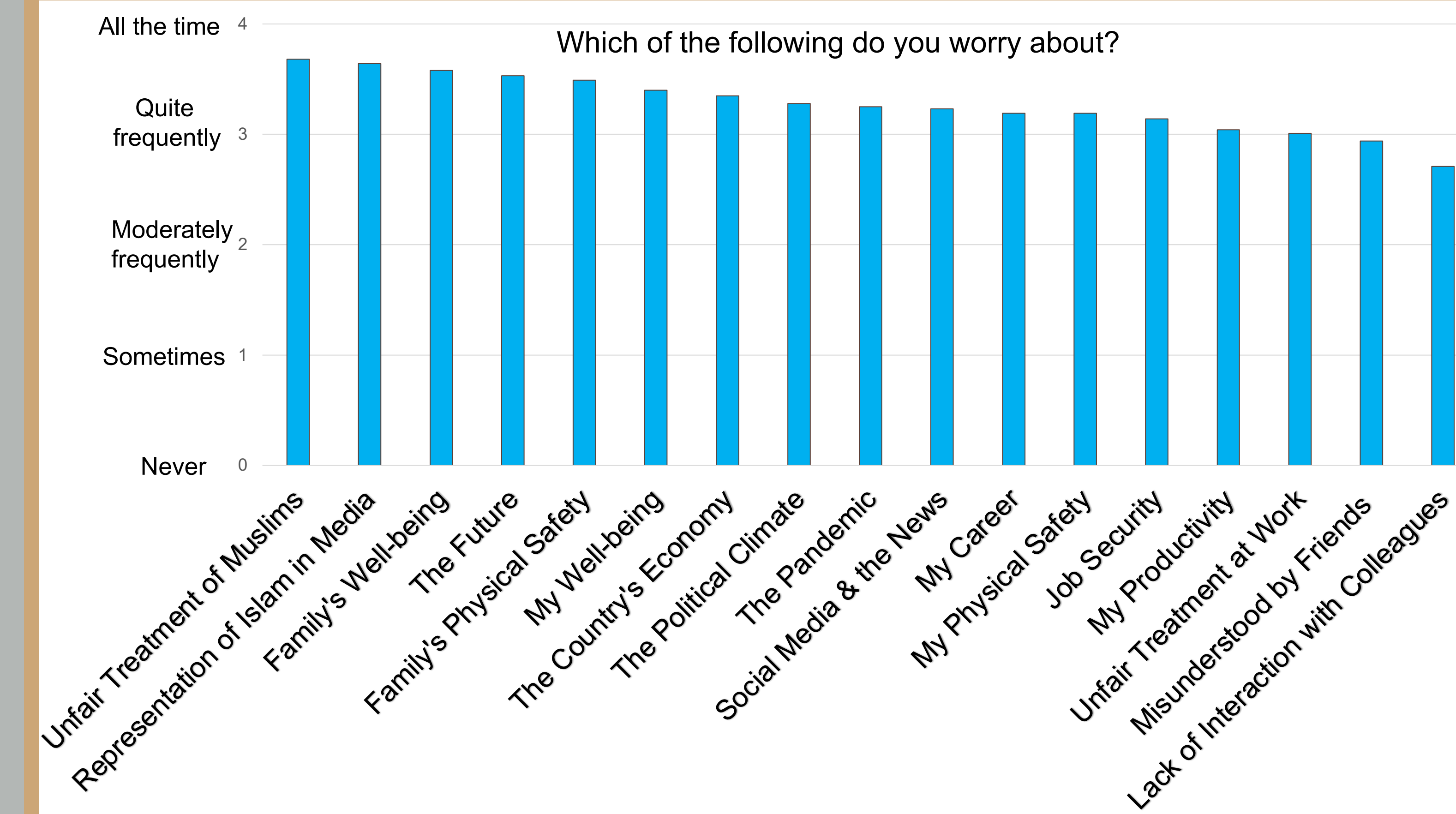
Measures:

- The study consisted of quantitative and qualitative measures presented to the participants through Qualtrics. The narrative measures allowed participants to explain their own unique experiences.
- The measures assessed the following psychological concepts:
 - Psychological Concerns* (Hassan and Rodriguez Mosquera, Culture & Emotion Lab)
 - In-group Identification* (centrality, Leach et al., 2008).
 - Emotional Feelings about In-group Identification* (Hassan and Rodriguez Mosquera, Culture & Emotion Lab).
 - Proximity to Muslim Communities* (Hassan and Rodriguez Mosquera, Culture & Emotion Lab).
 - Perceived Social Image* (Hassan and Rodriguez Mosquera, Culture & Emotion Lab).
 - Religious Coping and Empowerment* (Hassan and Rodriguez Mosquera, Culture & Emotion Lab).
 - Religious Coping* (Rodriguez Mosquera, Khan, & Selya, 2013; adaptation from Abu-Raija's religious coping scale, 2010).
 - Reactions to the Study* (Hassan and Rodriguez Mosquera, Culture & Emotion Lab).
- For the purpose of this poster, we will be discussing the results of the *Psychological Concerns* measures and the *Emotional Feelings about In-group Identification* measures.

Results

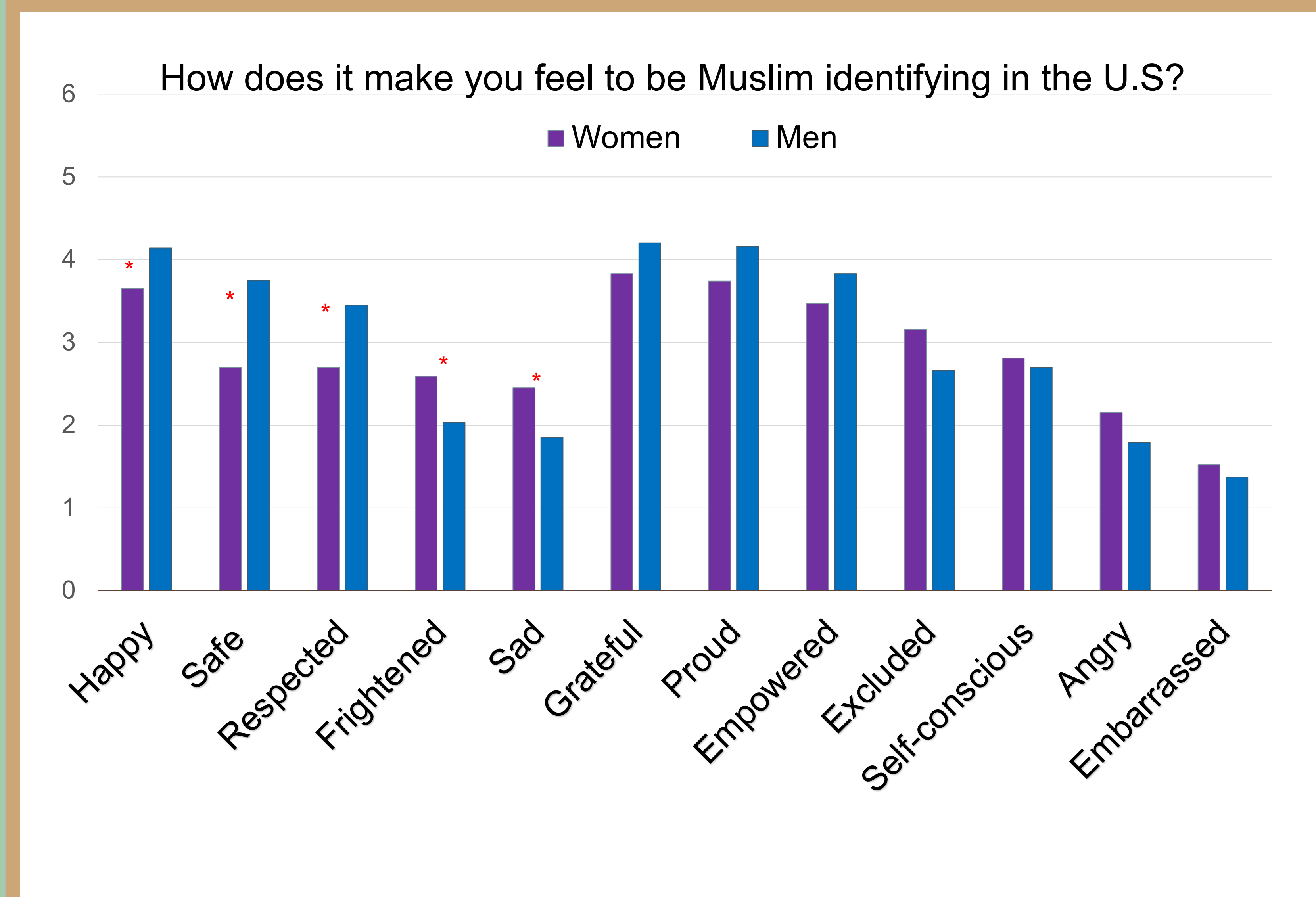
- Quantitative data analyses only included those participants who identified as women and men because we did not have at present enough data from other genders.
- An analyses of variance with gender as the independent factor, age as a covariate, and the intensity of felt emotions as the dependent variables yielded a marginally significant main effect of gender, $F(12, 159) = 1.79, p = .055$. In univariate terms, a gender difference was found for feeling respected, $F(1, 170) = 8.21, p = .005$; feeling safe, $F(1, 170) = 18.18, p < .001$; feeling frightened, $F(1, 170) = 4.57, p = .034$; feeling sad, $F(1, 170) = 5.35, p = .022$; feeling happy, $F(1, 170) = 3.94, p = .049$.
- An analyses of variance with gender as the independent factor, age as a covariate, and psychological concerns/worries as the dependent variables showed that the main effect of gender was not significant, $F(16, 155) = .75, p = .74$.

• The chart below presents the means for each psychological concern (measured with a single item). Standard deviations ranged between 1.15 and 1.40.



• The chart below presents the means for each emotion and gender. Each emotion was an average of the items that measured that emotional concept (all Cronbach alpha were higher than .70). Standard deviations ranged between 1.43 and 1.68 and were very similar across genders.

• Participants rated their emotions on an intensity scale from 0 - not at all, 1 - very slightly, 2 - a little, 3 - moderately, 4 - a bit, 5 - quite a bit, 6 - very much.



Conclusion

- There is a variation in gender regarding how Muslim women and Muslim men feel about being Muslim identifying in the U.S. Muslim women reported feeling more frightened and sad, and also feeling less happy, safe, and respected compared to Muslim men.
- Importantly, for both genders, the highest means were for feeling grateful, proud, and empowered about being Muslim identifying. Thus, religious identity was also a source of positive emotional experiences for the participants.
- No gender difference was found regarding the participants' worries and concerns. Participants reported being between moderately and quite frequently worried about their own well-being, their family's well-being, and the sociopolitical circumstances in the U.S.
- Importantly however, the highest means were for being worried about Muslims being treated unfairly in the U.S. and how Islam is represented in the Media. These results suggest that, for the participants, the well-being of their religious in-group was as equally important as their own and their family's well-being.
- When data collection is completed, all quantitative and qualitative measures will be analyzed to examine explanations for participants' psychological concerns and gender differences in emotions.

Works Cited

Abu-Raija, H., Pargament, K. I., Mahoney, A., & Stein, C. (2008). A psychological measure of Islamic religiousness: Development and evidence for reliability and validity. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 18*, 291-315.

Rodriguez Mosquera, P. M., Khan, T., & Selya, A. (2013). Coping with the 10th anniversary of 9/11: Muslim Americans' sadness, fear, and anger. *Cognition and Emotion, 27*, 932-941, DOI: 10.1080/02699931.2012.751358