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Examining the Social Identity of Being a Muslim in the American Workplace

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ABSTRACT

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Religion is often seen as a taboo and controversial topic in the workplace; however, it also plays an important role in many people’s lives. Over the past few decades, the religious landscape of the American workforce has become increasingly diverse. Unfortunately, as religious diversity in organizations has grown, so has the number of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charges involving religious discrimination, especially against Muslims. Even though many Muslims consider religion to be an important part of their lives, they may hesitate to fully identify with their religion publicly, such as in the workplace. This research used semi-structured interviews (N = 70) to examine current Muslim American workplace experiences through a social identity lens, exploring how intersectionality with other identities (i.e., gender) and interactions with other people (i.e., coworkers and leaders as allies) influence how Muslims experience religion at work. Although many participants talked about how their organizations are generally inclusive and supportive of providing accommodations, they also mentioned ways in which they feel like they are treated differently or excluded from social or professional opportunities. These results revealed that although many organizations are trying to be more tolerant of different faith groups, there are subtle ways in which organizations are signaling to their employees about who they value and are trying to advance. Participants discussed clear, tangible steps that leaders and coworkers can take to improve the experiences of Muslim Americans in the workplace, and future research and practical implications are discussed.
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“The only thing accepted as ‘normal’ for a Muslim is to act like an extremist. Ordinary Muslim folk appearing to live ordinary Muslim lives? That’s just plain suspicious.”

- Moustafa Bayoumi, The Nation, June 14, 2012

Religion is often seen as a taboo and controversial topic in the American workplace (Morgan, 2005). However, the nature of work in the United States is changing, and several of these changes may force a shift in this avoidance of religion at work. First, work is becoming more stressful. Over the past few decades, work has become more time-consuming and demanding (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1998; Cociuba, Prescott, & Ueberfeldt, 2018), and the increased utilization of technology in the workplace has generated uncertainty among employees of how certain job roles or tasks may change. Many Americans also see increased job outsourcing and hiring of contract or temporary workers as a threat to job security, and believe that job security will continue to get worse over the next few decades (Pew Research Center, 2016). These perceptions can lead to feelings of fear, frustration, anger, and distrust, and people may turn to faith as a way to provide meaning and cope (Cash & Gray, 2000). Over half of American adults claim that religion is very important in their lives (Pew Research Center, 2015), and in response to the increasing demands of work, people may be integrating their work and non-work identities more. Indeed, many scholars cite a recent “faith-at-work movement” (e.g., Lawrence & King, 2008), and organizations have noticed an increase in accommodation requests for religious holidays or other forms of religious expression (e.g., prayer, display of religious artifacts; Cash & Gray, 2000). Second, the U.S. has become more religiously diverse as a result of immigration and globalization. Although Christians still make up about 70% of the American
population, this number is decreasing – as the proportion of non-Christian faiths, such as Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, increases (Pew Research Center, 2015). Unfortunately, as religious diversity in organizations has grown, so has the number of U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charges involving religious discrimination (EEOC, 2018).

The discrimination against Muslim Americans has been especially salient. Immediately following the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the EEOC saw a 250% increase in religion-based discrimination charges involving Muslims, and these numbers have continued to increase through 2016 (EEOC, n.d.). In addition, 75% of Muslim Americans currently believe there is a lot of discrimination against Muslims in the U.S., and 50% believe that being a Muslim in the U.S. has gotten harder over recent years (Pew Research Center, 2017a). Half of U.S. Muslims said they experienced at least one instance of religious discrimination in the year prior to the survey, including being treated with suspicion, singled out by airport security or other law enforcement, called offensive names, or physically threatened or attacked (Pew Research Center, 2017a). As a result, Muslims may be hesitant to fully identify with their religion, both inside and outside of the workplace. However, the majority of Muslims also consider religion to be very important in their lives (Pew Research Center, 2015), and likely an important part of their identities. According to social identity theory, our identities play an important role in our self-concept, and how we view ourselves and others (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Within the workplace, our identities can influence how we interact with our coworkers and organizational leaders. Conversely, our interactions with others can also shape how we view our identities. Therefore, it is important to understand how employees develop and manage their identities at work, especially identities that may be stigmatized and can result in discrimination against them.
Due to events like 9/11 and their aftermath, the past two decades have seen a surge of research on the discrimination that Muslims face in the workplace (Bartkoski, Hermann, Witt, & Rudolph, 2018); however, few studies have examined the day-to-day experiences of Muslims and how they experience and manage their religious identities at work. The goal of this research is to use semi-structured interviews to further develop social identity theory as it applies to Muslims in the American workplace by examining how other identities (i.e., gender) and other people (i.e., coworkers and leaders as allies) can influence their identities and experiences as Muslims in the workplace.

**Theoretical Foundations**

**Social Identity Theory**

According to social identity theory, individuals classify themselves and others into different social categories, such as race, age, and gender (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Social identity theory is driven by this categorization of individuals into groups represented by prototypical attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), and this categorization typically results in the formation of an “in-group” (those who are in the same social category) and an “out-group” (those who are in a different social category than the in-group). Although the identities that form in-groups and out-groups may seem static, different contexts and situations can influence what identities are salient and how an individual wants to publicly identify (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Some identities are highly stigmatized (e.g., mental illness, disability, pregnancy), especially in the workplace, and individuals may be reluctant to reveal these identities. Identities are often categorized as visible and invisible; compared to visible identities, invisible identities do not have observable attributes, and individuals with these identities may try to conceal and “pass” as a less stigmatized identity (e.g., sexual orientation, religious affiliation). As a result,
these are also known as concealable identities, and previous research has examined the process and outcomes of managing these identities in the workplace (e.g., Clair, Beatty, & Maclean, 2005; Jones & King, 2014; Lynch & Rodell, 2018; Ragins, 2008).

Due to the current sociopolitical climate, being Muslim is often seen as a stigmatized identity. Because stigma can lead to negative outcomes like prejudice and discrimination, Muslims may engage in various identity management strategies in an attempt to avoid some of these outcomes. These strategies include concealing, providing individuating information, claiming, and downplaying (Clair et al., 2005; Lyons et al., 2018; Singletary & Hebl, 2009).

Being Muslim can be a concealable identity, both for women (who choose not to wear the hijab or another type of covering) and for men (who typically do not wear religious attire outside of prayer). However, concealing an identity, particularly when it is central to one’s overall self-concept, is not without consequences. It can cause significant psychological and emotional strain (Major & Gramzow, 1999; Pachankis, 2007; Smart & Wegner, 2000), which can detract from work and hinder relationships with coworkers. As a result, Muslims may reveal their religious identities, but engage in other identity management strategies. For example, they can try to provide individuating information, which is information about oneself beyond what is known from group membership. Individuation allows others to rely less on stereotypes, encouraging them to form more complex evaluations of the individual. Providing information that is countere stereotypical (e.g., a gay male indicating that he plays football) may be particularly helpful in reducing potential discrimination. Muslims can also try claiming or downplaying their identity. Claiming emphasizes the positive aspects of the identity and reframes negative stereotypes; in contrast, downplaying tries to diminish the negative stereotypes associated with the identity or shifts attention away from the identity (Lyons et al., 2018).
The identity management strategies that Muslim employees utilize also depend on their organizations and the other people who work there. Researchers have started to incorporate social identity theory into organizational literature (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000), describing how social identities are formed during organizational socialization and how these identities then influence intergroup relations at work. In addition, Clair and colleagues (2005) have created a generalized model for invisible identity management, highlighting how individual differences and interpersonal and environmental context can influence the decision to conceal or reveal a stigmatized invisible identity at work (see Figure 1). Relatedly, Meyer (2003) generated a minority stress model to help illustrate how individuals from stigmatized social categories are often exposed to negative intergroup processes (e.g., prejudice, discrimination) that can impact outcomes like minority mental health (see Figure 2). Because of the continual effects of social identities, we need to understand how all possible identities may be influenced by the workplace context. Although religion and work both play important roles in many Americans’ lives, religion is often overlooked in workplace diversity conversations, compared to other identities (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation; King, Bell, & Lawrence, 2009). But as the religious diversity of the U.S. continues to change, this will no longer be an option. Islam is the fastest-growing religion across the world and is projected to exceed Judaism as the second-largest faith group in the U.S. by 2050 (Pew Research Center, 2017b). At the same time, over half of Americans would agree that Muslims still face a lot of discrimination (Pew Research Center, 2019). As a result, it is important to understand how these demographic changes and their subsequent effects will influence the social identities and experiences of Muslim Americans in the workplace.
Literature Review

Religion at Work

Although religion has appeared in organizational research since the early 1900s, it is no longer often discussed in the top applied psychology and management journals – and few, if any, articles talk about how religion is conceptualized as a social identity in the workplace. Tracey (2012) conducted a review of articles in management journals with a focus on religion, finding 86 articles – only 21 of which were published in high-impact journals. A similar search in the top journals for industrial-organizational psychology (Zickar & Highhouse, 2001; see Table 1) reveals only 58 articles focused on religion, over half of which were published before 1990. A common theme in these articles is simply applying organizational concepts to a religious context. For example, Wicker and Kauma (1974) examined the effects of merging two organizations on members’ behaviors and experiences, with the two organizations being churches, and Tygart (1974) examined work alienation and politics, with a clergy sample. Previous research has also looked at how religious values impact job attitudes (Chusmir & Koberg, 1988; Vecchio, 1980), ethical behavior in organizations (Weaver & Agle, 2002), career adaptability (Duffy & Blustein, 2005), and manager behavior (Senger, 1970), and more recent research has started examining religious discrimination and harassment issues (Ghumman & Jackson, 2010; Ghumman, Ryan, & Park, 2016; King & Ahmad, 2010). In addition to these recent articles, a quick search in the Academy of Management Proceedings, which is an online publication of paper and symposium abstracts from the annual Academy of Management conference, reveals around 200 to 300 relevant results on religion at work. Many of these are after 2000, which highlights a growing interest in examining the intersection of religion and work; however, looking back at the smaller
number of peer-reviewed publications in our top journals, it does not seem that this interest is being fully translated from conference presentations to highly cited research articles.

Outside of the top applied psychology and management journals, there is more research on how spirituality and religion impact different workplace outcomes, as well as how organizations create and implement policies that address religious diversity. For example, Benefiel and colleagues (2014) discuss how spirituality and religion have been linked to different organizational processes and outcomes, such as manager and leader practices, job commitment, productivity, job satisfaction, work performance, and job involvement. It has also been suggested that spirituality and religion in the workplace can help improve ethical behaviors and decision-making (Fernando & Jackson, 2006; Garcia-Zamor, 2003), as well as buffer the negative effects of emotional labor (Byrne, Morton, & Dahling, 2011). However, it is often hard to disentangle the effects of spirituality versus religion, and some researchers even argue that spirituality may be beneficial for organizations, but religion is not (e.g., Mitroff, 2003). In response to these discussions, some researchers have started to focus more on the specific effects of religion in the workplace and how they impact employee behaviors and organizational outcomes (e.g., Day, 2005).

There are also multiple articles on how organizations should address religion at work. A recent framework has been proposed to identify four organizational approaches to addressing religion and spirituality at work – faith-avoiding, faith-based, faith-safe, and faith-friendly (Miller & Ewest, 2015). Faith-avoiding organizations suppress expressions of faith; faith-based organizations are grounded in one particular faith; faith-safe organizations tolerate employee expressions of faith at work but do not encourage it; and faith-friendly organizations embrace the expression and value of faith at work (Miller & Ewest, 2015). A number of articles have also
discussed what types of religious accommodations may be requested and how employment law works in these situations (e.g., Atkinson, 2004; Cash & Gray, 2000; Krahne & Hoffman, 2002). Others provide recommendations to employers, such as training managers so that they know how to appropriately respond to accommodation requests (Atkinson, 2004) or creating a culture of “respectful pluralism” where employees can express their own faiths while respecting others’ faiths – as opposed to promoting a single religion within the organization (Hicks, 2002, p. 392). However, organizations’ good intentions may not be fully understood by the employees; for example, Borstorff (2011) examined employee perceptions concerning religious accommodations, and only about half of their survey respondents felt that their employer clearly communicated their policies regarding religious accommodations or that their organizations incorporated faiths other than Christianity and Judaism. These organizational approaches and policies likely play an important role in influencing how Muslim employees view the organizational culture and how acceptable it is to express their religious identities at work.

**Muslim Americans at Work**

Research examining the Muslim experience at work is even less developed than the literature on religion at work, but seems to be growing quickly. In 2018, Bartkoski and colleagues conducted a meta-analysis of employment discrimination against Muslims and Arabs; all 26 of their included studies were after 2005, and almost 20 of them were after 2010. The meta-analysis found discrimination throughout different points of the employment process and across multiple countries (Bartkoski et al., 2018), and recent EEOC charges have also brought to light how certain aspects of being a practicing Muslim are currently perceived as incongruent with organizational norms in the U.S. In 2015, Abercrombie and Fitch refused to hire Samantha Elauf, a Muslim woman, because she wore a headscarf that did not comply with their dress code
(EEOC v. Abercrombie & Fitch Stores, Inc., 2015). In the same year, more than 100 Muslim workers were fired from Cargill Inc. in a dispute over their prayer breaks at work (Coffman, 2018). Although Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination against individuals based on their religion in hiring, promotion, or in their terms and conditions of employment, it is clear that organizations are still struggling with providing equitable treatment.

Discrimination at work can also manifest in a multitude of ways. For example, multiple articles have demonstrated that when Muslim Americans send in a résumé for a job, they are rated worse for job-related characteristics (e.g., hireability, salary assignment) and receive fewer callbacks compared to their non-Muslim counterparts (Adida, Laitin, & Valfort, 2010; Park, Malachi, Sternin, & Tevet, 2009; Wallace, Wright, & Hyde, 2014; Wright, Wallace, Bailey & Hyde, 2013). In addition to this more overt discrimination, it is possible that Muslim Americans are experiencing more subtle types of discrimination as well. In 2002, Hebl, Foster, Mannix, and Dovidio outlined the differences between overt formal discrimination and subtle interpersonal discrimination. Examples of formal discrimination include denying individuals of jobs, access, resources, and/or promotions due to their stigmatized status – discrimination that one can file an EEOC claim for. In contrast, interpersonal discrimination consists of nonverbal and paraverbal cues, such as a lack of smiling or eye contact, less interest or positivity, and shorter interactions (Hebl et al., 2002). Although the manifestation of interpersonal discrimination may seem subtle and minor, a meta-analysis by Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, and Gray (2016) demonstrated that interpersonal discrimination has negative effects that are comparable to those of formal discrimination on individual work outcomes (career success, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job stress), organizational outcomes (job withdrawal, turnover intentions and behaviors, performance), physical health outcomes (substance use, exercise, food selection,
symptomology, cardiovascular health, body size), and psychological health outcomes (life satisfaction, self-esteem, stress, emotions, symptomology).

Research has demonstrated the existence of this interpersonal discrimination against Muslim Americans. King and Ahmad (2010) conducted a study in which female job applicants either wore traditional Muslim or nonreligious attire, and although no differences emerged with respect to interview offers (i.e., formal discrimination), interactions were shorter and rated as more interpersonally negative (i.e., interpersonal discrimination) for job applicants in Muslim attire than those in nonreligious attire. Ghumman and Ryan (2013) conducted a similar study, finding both formal and interpersonal discrimination, in addition to lower job offer expectations, for the female confederates who wore the Muslim headscarf (i.e., hijab). One could argue that this was due to the non-Muslim confederates’ expectations to receive discrimination when they wore the hijab; however, an online study with Muslim women demonstrated the same results – Muslim women who wear the hijab had lower job offer expectations than Muslim women who do not wear the hijab (Ghumman & Jackson, 2010).

In addition to these experimental designs, other research has examined Muslim workplace experiences through online surveys. For example, Reeves, McKinney, and Azam (2012) found that Muslim women who wear the hijab had negative experiences of intolerance and discrimination, and similar to previously discussed research, they also had perceptions of more limited employment opportunities. Ali, Yamada, and Mahmood (2015) further explored the impact of the discrimination that Muslim American women (both hijab and non-hijab wearing) face, finding that this discrimination, along with job stress, social class, and religiosity, were related to lower levels of job satisfaction. More in-depth interviews have also been conducted with Muslims about their work experiences, highlighting the complexities of the intersection
between gender, ethnicity, and religion, as well as how these experiences are shaped at the individual, organizational, and societal level (Essers & Benschop, 2009; Sav, Sebar, & Harris, 2010; Syed & Pio, 2010). However, all of these interview studies have been conducted with Muslims who are working outside of the U.S. (e.g., Netherlands, Australia), and this study examines how these experiences may differ in the American context, which is especially important with the current sociopolitical climate and growing Muslim population in the U.S.

This study also digs deeper into the role of social identity theory in how Muslims experience and manage their religious identities at work, which leads to the first research question:

*Research Question 1: How do Muslim Americans experience their religion at work?*

**The Intersection of Religion and Gender**

Intersectionality theory considers the meaning and implications of simultaneous membership in multiple social groups (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989), proposing that the inequities related to one identity can interrelate with the inequities related to another identity. One of the most common intersections examined is that between gender and race; for example, the double jeopardy hypothesis suggests that women of color experience the discrimination that both racial minority men and White women face, receiving both sexual and racial prejudice (Beal, 2008; Chow, 1987; Hooks, 1989; Reid, 1984). In a recent study, Rosette and Livingston (2012) found that Black female leaders who experienced organizational failure were evaluated more negatively than Black male and White female leaders in the same condition. This double jeopardy was due to the fact that Black women were two degrees removed from the White male leadership prototype, as White women and Black men were able to benefit from at least one prototypical identity (i.e., being White or male; Rosette & Livingston, 2012).
Social role theory states that men are expected to display agentic qualities (e.g., independence, assertiveness, self-confidence), and women are expected to display communal qualities (e.g., friendliness, unselfishness, concern for others; Eagly & Wood, 1991). These expectations can influence what roles men and women are supposed to take on in society, as evidenced by the male-breadwinner, female-homemaker model (Creighton, 1996) or what are seen as stereotypically masculine or feminine jobs (Cejka & Eagly, 1999). These stereotypes not only serve a descriptive role, but sometimes a prescriptive one as well. Women who act in an agentic manner (e.g., initiating negotiations, taking on a managerial or leadership role) can receive backlash in the form of decreased likability and hireability (Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010; Rudman & Glick, 2001). This could potentially be due to the role congruity theory of prejudice, as agentic women are seen as violating the communal roles that society expects them to fulfill (Eagly & Karau, 2002), or the status incongruity hypothesis, which suggests that agentic women receive backlash because this protects the existing gender hierarchy (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012).

The way gender intersects with other identities can further influence how men and women are perceived. Races themselves are often perceived as gendered, with Blacks being seen as more masculine than Whites and Asians seen as more feminine than Whites (Galinsky, Hall, & Cuddy, 2013), which influences how Black and Asian women are perceived. For example, studies conducted by Ghavami and Peplau (2013) and Rosette and colleagues (2016) found that Black women are stereotyped most frequently as having an attitude and being loud, confident, and assertive, while Asian women are often seen as intelligent, quiet, shy, and family-oriented. When it is disclosed, sexual orientation can also interact with gender to influence how men and women are perceived, such that gay men are seen as less masculine and more feminine than
heterosexual men, and lesbian women are seen as more masculine and less feminine than heterosexual women (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Intersectionality has also been examined with age and gender, with some arguing that there is a double standard of aging, where women are perceived as reaching middle and old age earlier than men do and devalued more quickly (see Kite & Wagner, 2002, for a review).

Compared to the previously mentioned identities, religion has been relatively under-explored with respect to its intersections with gender. Women are often claimed to be more religious than men (see Francis, 1997, for a review); however, a more recent examination by Sullins (2006) counters this claim that women are universally more religious. He outlines the difference between affective (personal piety) and active (organizational participation) religiosity and finds that in a third of countries, women are about the same or lower than men in active religiousness; he also notes that among Jews and Muslims across the world, men are actually more religious than women (Sullins, 2006). Within Islam, gender is a particularly salient identity; Muslim women who wear the hijab or other coverings are likely perceived as more religious than Muslim men – or at least more visibly so. As a result, they may be less able to conceal or avoid addressing their religion at work. In addition, there are different stereotypes for Muslim men and women. Muslim men are often seen as violent and dangerous, more likely to be viewed as a threat, whereas Muslim women are often seen as victims of oppression, a group that needs to be “saved” (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Bullock, 2010; El-Solh & Mabro, 1994; Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006; Mishra, 2007). These perceptions are exaggerated versions of the gender stereotypes set by social role theory, and they likely play a role in how Muslim men and women are viewed and treated in the workplace, which leads to the second research question:
Research Question 2: How does gender influence the workplace experiences of Muslim Americans, and consequently, their experience of religion at work?

How Out-Group Members Influence Religious Identity at Work

The categorization of individuals at work into in-groups and out-groups can lead to intergroup conflict if these groups view each other in a negative manner or do not get along (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and existing research on intergroup relations has primarily focused on how in-group favoritism and out-group derogation contribute to this conflict (e.g., Balliet, Wu, & De Dreu, 2014; Brewer, 1999; Crocker, Thompson, McGraw, & Ingerman, 1987; Dasgupta, 2004). However, few studies have examined positive intergroup relations and how these might be fostered. One key example is the Robber’s Cave Experiment, where Sherif (1956) demonstrated that having a superordinate goal (i.e., a goal that requires the groups’ cooperation to achieve) can improve the relationships between two groups that were previously divided. Although external motivators like superordinate goals are important to identify, in this study, I seek to understand how individuals in different social groups may be able to foster these positive interactions themselves. In particular, I am focusing on how out-group members can help improve intergroup relations with Muslims through allyship.

The traditional use of the term ally refers to individuals who are supportive of minority sexual orientation or gender identity issues, but do not personally identify as being part of these groups (DiStefano, Croteau, Anderson, Kampa-Kokesch, & Bullard, 2000; Ji, 2007). However, the term can be readily applied to any supporter of a group to which they do not belong. Ally behaviors have often been defined as falling into two categories: support and advocacy (Ji, 2007; Sabat, Martinez, & Wessel, 2013). Ally support provides psychological and/or tangible resources for individuals with stigmatized identities; examples of these behaviors include being present and
listening to the unique struggles faced by these individuals, participating in ally trainings, attending educational or social events held by minority groups, and receiving disclosures (e.g., of sexual orientation, mental illness) with acceptance and understanding (DiStefano et al., 2000; Ruggs, Martinez, & Hebl, 2011). In contrast, ally advocacy involves more outward and proactive support, such as directly confronting instances of prejudice or discrimination, educating peers, calling for better organizational policies and resources that support stigmatized groups, and actively engaging in advocacy organizations (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Ruggs et al., 2011).

The allyship that Muslims receive at work likely impacts how comfortable they feel expressing their religious identity at work. Lawrence and King (2008) explored determinants of religious expression in the workplace, finding that both individual religiosity and company culture influences the level of religious expression. Similarly, research on disclosing other concealable identities (e.g., sexual orientation, transsexual identity) in the workplace has demonstrated the importance of organization and coworker support, identity centrality, and the degree to which disclosure has occurred outside of the workplace (Dalgin & Gilbride, 2003; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Huffman, Watrous-Rodriguez, & King, 2008; Law, Martinez, Ruggs, Hebl, & Akers, 2011; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). In providing this support, both coworkers and organizational leaders may serve as allies, but leaders may be more instrumentally effective because of the power they hold in organizations. Researchers have suggested that leaders can help by modeling ally behaviors for employees and establishing inclusive and anti-discriminatory norms (Schneider, Wesselmann, & DeSouza, 2017). In addition, where state and federal legislation fails to protect the workplace rights of stigmatized individuals (e.g., LGBTQ individuals), organizations and their leaders can serve as important examples by creating organizational policies that promote equality and pushing for larger
legislative changes (Martinez, Ruggs, Sabat, Hebl, & Binggeli, 2013). As such, this study examines how coworker and organizational leader allyship influences Muslim employees’ perceptions of their social identities and interactions with others, which leads to the third research question:

*Research Question 3: How do out-group members, as coworker and leader allies, influence the social identities and experiences of Muslims at work?*

**Method**

This study used a grounded theory approach, which Charmaz (2014) defines as “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (p. 1). Similar to other research methods, grounded theory starts with a research question, but this approach is especially useful in unpacking subtle or subjective constructs, because it focuses on generating theoretical statements about how individuals interpret their reality, as opposed to testing hypotheses (Suddaby, 2006). This applies to this study’s research questions because they are relatively broad and open-ended, and subjective constructs are involved (e.g., identity, interpersonal discrimination). For data collection, semi-structured interviews were used because they would allow for an in-depth exploration of the research questions with individuals who have relevant experiences.

Grounded theory is characterized by two main concepts: constant comparison, where the data is collected and analyzed simultaneously, and theoretical sampling, where the sampling of participants is aimed toward theory construction, not population representativeness. The goal of this study is to further social identity theory and how it applies to religious minorities (in this case, Muslims) by exploring how intersectionality with other identities (i.e., gender) and interactions with other people (i.e., coworkers and leaders as allies) can influence the
development and management of Muslims’ social identities in the workplace. To help accomplish this goal, there is an iterative process of data collection and analysis in grounded theory, as the researcher takes note of emerging theoretical concepts and refines interview questions along the way. Data collection is completed when theoretical saturation is reached, in that gathering more data no longer generates new theoretical insights or properties of the core theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2014).

Participants

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling and local Muslim organizations, and all participants were either currently employed or had previously been employed. The final sample included 70 Muslim Americans. Prior to completing their interviews, all participants filled out a demographics and background survey. The majority were Sunni Muslims (76%), and most participants stated that their religion was “very central” to their identity (74%). The majority of the participants were also college-educated (86% had bachelor’s degrees or higher); over half (67%) had been working for at least five years; and over half of the participants described their current workplaces as somewhat or very religiously diverse (69%). A variety of industries were represented, including education, consulting, customer service, finance, healthcare, legal services, non-profit work, construction, manufacturing, energy, technology, marketing, and engineering.

There was a wide range of ages represented, with the highest number of participants in the 25-34 age group (37%). 74% of the participants were Asian, and 57% were female. 58% of the women wore some type of religious covering, and of these women, 35% said that they had removed this covering or altered their appearance in some way to avoid negative interactions, such as confrontation, prejudice, or discrimination. The men were asked a similar question, and
27% of them said that they had altered their appearance in some way to avoid negative interactions. See Table 2 for detailed sample demographics.

**Interviews**

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, either in-person or via phone. All in-person interviews were conducted in a private room at Rice University. Initial interviews were conducted in a focus group format \((N = 15, \text{ in groups of two to four})\); however, this was later adjusted to help accommodate participants’ schedules, as well as to provide additional privacy and confidentiality in the interviews. Each interview/focus group lasted between 20 and 80 minutes \((M = 34.0, SD = 14.8)\), and all of the sessions (except for one) were audio-recorded with the participant’s permission. The interview protocol consisted mainly of two sets of open-ended questions (see Appendix A), and when appropriate, follow-up or clarifying questions were asked. The first set of questions focused on the participants’ workplace experiences and how their religion and gender influenced these experiences, and the second set of questions asked about the participants’ experiences with coworkers and organizational leaders. After an initial set of interviews, these questions were expanded to include supervisors and managers, whom the participants did not consider to be coworkers but also did not put on the same level as organizational leaders (e.g., the CEO or president of the company). The interview protocol was also modified to include questions about organizational practices or policies that were relevant to the participants’ religious identity (e.g., accommodations, diversity trainings), in order to better understand their organizational contexts. To help ensure methodological fidelity, at the end of each interview, the participants were also given the opportunity to share anything relevant that had not been covered by the interview questions (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2017).
Data Analysis

All audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed in Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis tool. Qualitative coding involves labeling data segments with different categories that help define and summarize what the data is about. Following Charmaz’s (2014) process for grounded theory, I had three phases of coding: line-by-line, focused, and theoretical. These three different phrases help generate both contextual analyses of specific events and actions and broader, more generalizable theoretical statements (Charmaz, 2014).

The initial coding consisted of line-by-line analysis in order to make sure none of the data was overlooked. Line-by-line coding stays close to the data; the codes are specific to what is happening in the text, and few generalizing statements are made. This type of analysis helps to start separating the data into categories and examining processes by defining actions, looking for potential assumptions and implicit meanings, and describing the significance of certain points (Charmaz, 2014). As more data is collected, this process also involves comparing the data currently being analyzed with data that was previously analyzed, to examine similarities and differences, and identifying potential gaps in the data that can be addressed in future interviews.

After the initial coding of an interview, focused coding was utilized to synthesize the line-by-line codes and help explain larger segments of data. Focused coding is more selective and conceptual than line-by-line coding (Glaser, 1978), and it involves determining which of the initial codes are the most significant and/or frequently used in categorizing the data. Throughout the line-by-line and focused coding, the codes remained flexible, such that if a new code emerged in the coding of later interviews, it would be added to my codebook and I would go back and apply that code to any previous situations or statements it could help provide additional insight for.
Then, after an initial 10 interviews were analyzed using line-by-line and focused coding, I used theoretical coding to examine how the categories from focused coding related to one another. As an example of how theoretical coding can be used, Glaser (1978) describes 18 theoretical coding families, such as the “Six Cs: Causes, Contexts, Contingencies, Covariances, and Conditions” (p.74). This type of coding helps to integrate findings and provide more clarity on an emerging theoretical framework. After using the initial interviews to create a base structure for my theoretical coding, I then revisited my theoretical codes after every 20 interviews to adjust the groups and relations as needed. When generating the initial theoretical model, I did not use any prior theoretical models to relate the theoretical codes to each other to avoid being influenced by previous work. However, after creating the initial model, I referred to both Meyer’s (2003) model on minority stress and Clair and colleagues’ (2005) model on identity management to help me refine my model and make sure that it not only was grounded in the data but also allowed me to build on existing theoretical models.

In qualitative research, the main focus of having multiple coders is not to have high concordance on the same codes, but rather to highlight any potential missed or competing connections (Barbour, 2001). As such, throughout the process of my coding, I had a small research team of four double-coding the interviews, following all of the phases of line-by-line, focused, and theoretical coding. This process was an adaptation of previous qualitative coding processes in peer-reviewed articles (e.g., Dahm, Kim, Glomb, & Harrison, 2018; Humberd, Ladge, & Harrington, 2015; Obodaru, 2017; Trefalt, 2013).

All members of the research team were trained in how to use Atlas.ti and proceed through the different phases of coding. During their training process, the coders would complete line-by-line and focused coding for an initial set of five interviews, after which I would check their codes
to make sure that they understood how to generate line-by-line and focused codes. After this initial set, we would have regular check-ins to discuss their findings and any issues or questions that may have come up during the coding process. Every 10 completed interviews or so, the coders would send their coded interviews to me, and we would resolve any major discrepancies in the way that we were processing the data. Similar to my coding, after the double-coders analyzed their interviews with line-by-line and focused coding, they were asked to generate their theoretical codes, and these were compared across all coders.

The double-coders did not code overlapping interviews, and each individual coder coded from seven to 27 interviews ($M = 15.5, SD = 8.4$). In addition, in order to minimize leading the double coders to generate my exact codes or findings, I blinded their interviews to the questions that I asked in the interviews and did not provide them with a generated list of codes for them to work off of. This way, they were able to read and examine the participant responses without preconceived notions, and help highlight any codes or themes that I may have missed in my coding process.

**Results**

In total, there were 613 line-by-line codes, 27 focused codes, and nine theoretical codes (aggregate themes). Table 3 provides a data structure diagram to illustrate the process of moving from line-by-line codes to aggregate themes. Due to the large volume of line-by-line codes, the data structure diagram contains a summarized version of the codes (see Appendix B for a full list of line-by-line codes). The results are roughly organized by the aggregate themes of workplace interactions; individual, interpersonal, and contextual factors that shape these experiences; the appraisal of these experiences, and the identity management behaviors that follow these experiences, which helps answer the original research questions surrounding Muslim Americans’
experiences of religious identity at work (How do Muslim Americans experience their religion at work?), the influence of gender on Muslim American work experiences (How does gender influence the workplace experiences of Muslim Americans, and consequently, their experience of religion at work?), and the impact of interactions with others on these experiences (How do out-group members, as coworker and leader allies, influence the social identities and experiences of Muslims at work?). The aggregate themes were also tied together in a theoretical model that integrated and updated Clair and colleagues’ (2005) model for identity management and Meyer’s (2003) model for minority stress; see Figure 3 for the updated model.

**Research Question 1: How do Muslim Americans experience their religion at work?**

**Workplace interactions.** Many participants discussed positive interactions at their workplace, mentioning the acceptance and inclusivity of their coworkers and organizational leaders. They talked about not really experiencing prejudice or discrimination at work, receiving support for their religious practices, and generally being treated as everyone else was treated. Their work was evaluated based on merit and not any aspect of their identity. For example, one participant stated,

> Nothing’s really ever come up – I think that that’s really nice about where I work right now, it’s really not about me wearing the scarf. And that’s sort of like a non-issue, which is great because they can focus on my actual work and critique me on my work...It’s never - my scarf is really never brought up which is really - I like it. I mean people ask me about it but as far as understanding why I wear it, it’s never come up in performance, which is fantastic to me.

However, other participants discussed negative experiences with discrimination in the workplace, including formal, overt, and subtle discrimination. Here, I make the distinction
between formal and overt discrimination, in that formal discrimination has to do with the denial of jobs, access, resources, and/or promotions due to some identity, whereas overt discrimination represents behaviors that are not discussed in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but are clearly anti-Muslim. This is in contrast with subtle discrimination, which includes actions that can be negative or exclusionary – but are less obviously so.

Instances of formal discrimination in this sample included being denied accommodations or benefits or not being selected for an interview, job, or promotion – although participants also mentioned that is often hard to prove that discrimination on the basis of religious identity occurred. One participant noted,

*When you touch a decade at one company… if you work, if you’re one of those people who works their butt off, and not just that, you make it a point to your direct bosses that you know what, I am looking for a promotion, every single year. Good ratings and everything. It’s like there’s just no excuse to not promote me when there has been an opportunity open. And it hasn’t happened… I keep telling myself ‘No, no no. There’s probably something else. There’s probably something else. Maybe I messed something up. Maybe I pissed somebody off,’ but I just can’t find any concrete example, so what else is left, you know.*

Participants also described receiving discrimination as customers or providers, and being denied service or business due to their Muslim identity. For example, although a participant’s mother was previously able to book a venue years ago, when she tried again more recently, they told her, “You’re not Christian, and we’re not going to allow you to book this hall.” Another participant mentioned how after a client realized he was Muslim, the client simply said, “Well, we don’t do business with Muslims.”
Instances of **overt discrimination** did not have to do with job opportunities or issues with receiving accommodations, benefits, or service; however, they were clear demonstrations of anti-Muslim feelings. Although not common, a few participants noted coworkers making anti-Muslim comments in the workplace (e.g., “Muslims are evil”) or putting the participant on the spot to answer questions about Islam (e.g., “How can you be a feminist and Muslim?”). As one participant described,

*So we were debating a lot of things, a lot of questions, and he wasn’t shy about putting me on the spot with the questions, so you know... It was very much like performance art. Everyone was there. Everyone was watching. Everyone was talking about it, and I couldn’t really step away from it without it being like, ‘Oh, you claimed defeat,’ kind of thing, or, I don’t know... I told myself that I liked that he brought that to the table, and I could at least speak for it, instead of having it fester kind of in his mind the whole time, and for it to leak out in other ways. But then again, like, did I really like that? Did I have a choice?*

Far more common were instances of **subtle discrimination**, which could manifest in a number of different ways, including people avoiding eye contact or staring, being uncertain or uncomfortable in interactions, asking ignorant questions, making offensive comments or jokes, or wanting to “fix” or “save” the participant. In many of these experiences, participants noted that others likely were not being intentionally discriminatory, but they still felt like an out-group or someone who did not quite belong. For instance, participants discussed how people often made assumptions about what they could or could not do (e.g., socializing at a bar, shaking hands with a member of the opposite sex), and mentioned how they wished that others would ask them about their preferences — rather than deciding for them. They also noted how people often
did not seem to understand how different Muslims could have different practices, such as with respect to fasting, daily prayers, drinking alcohol, etc., or how Muslims could be “normal” and engage in typical American activities. One participant recalled,

_Someone [asked], hey how was your Thanksgiving recently? I was like oh we put up our Christmas tree, and no one was rude or anything about it, but the group I was with was like I don’t understand, why would you do that? You’re a Muslim, and I was like, yeah well but we kind of celebrate the American portions of the holiday, we just participate in that. And they were just like, that doesn’t make any sense, like I don’t understand why you do that._

**Environmental context.** These experiences can largely be shaped by the context in which the participants are in, both in and out of the workplace. People are often socialized to believe certain stereotypes about different groups, which can influence how individuals perceive and interact with Muslim Americans. A number of participants noted the influence of stereotypes and how they color others’ perceptions of Muslims; for example, one male participant described,

_When you are up for promotion, you have to start acting that way. That’s when people see you [as] being qualified to be promoted. And I’ve tried to step up my game a little bit, tried to make executive decisions, tried to show people that I can in fact make independent decisions and calls and such…I saw other local buddies of mine do the same thing and then be able to climb up the ladder…but it’s interesting that when others did it, that was just seen as ‘Oh, wow. That guy is taking the initiative,’ and when I did it, it was just seen as ‘What’s wrong with you? Why are you being such a control freak?’ or something or ‘Why are you being so aggressive?’_
These stereotypes are heavily impacted by the **exposure to and education surrounding Islam** that others receive. Participants often attributed their more negative experiences with others to a lack of awareness, knowledge, or exposure, as well as incorrect perceptions – such as those propagated by media portrayals. Some participants mentioned being the only Muslims that their colleagues knew and noted that many people are not taught about Islam in schools, universities, or organizations; as a result, they are unlikely to understand the diversity and variety of Muslim Americans. One participant described,

> Like every time we see something on TV, it’s like somebody in a hijab. Like that’s...one aspect of being a Muslim, right? I don’t have to be wearing a hijab, I can be very Muslim but not have a hijab on my head, so I can look really different from that person who wears a hijab, but I’m still a practicing person and I hold the same values, but I don’t outwardly show it as such. So it’s just a very like one-dimensional view that they show in the media of a Muslim person. It’s always somebody with a hijab, as a woman...[and] they won’t talk to a lot of people.

This is also tied to the **sociopolitical climate** in the U.S., and how Muslim Americans have been perceived and treated over the past few decades. A number of participants noted how experiences got worse after 9/11, as well as after the election of President Trump. Although these participants observed that people have become more open about their prejudices and biases, they also mentioned the support they have received in response to events like the Muslim ban. For example, one participant noted that colleagues said they would register as Muslims on the Muslim registry, even though they were not Muslims, and others talked about peers offering help with everyday activities,
When 9/11 happened, my husband recommended not to go out for a week or so. But, at the same time, our neighbors, normal American neighbors, they came, knocked on our door, and told us ‘If you don’t feel like going out, we know you wear headscarves, if you need anything, we can get the groceries for you.’

[After the Muslim ban] Another one, she offered, you know, she was like, ‘if you’re afraid, I will come to the gas station with you when you’re filling up gas and I will stand around for you.’

Factors within the workplace also play a role in influencing the experiences of Muslim Americans. Many participants noted the importance of **organizational diversity** and how having simply one other Muslim in the workplace could make a big difference in feeling less awkward requesting accommodations and having to field fewer questions about their religious practices. Participants also cited the challenge in finding a mentor with a similar background, as well as the value of having such a mentor. One participant talked about a leader on her team,

*His parents had converted to Islam and he did not, but he understood the faith, he understood the rules, and just the nuances of what it was just like being a minority. And so he was very helpful. And you know, you kind of feel comfortable opening up to those people about like, hey I’m not sure about this or I’m uncertain about this, and I think that’s really empowering.*

In addition to organizational diversity, another workplace factor that critically impacts Muslim American experiences is **organizational culture and policies**. Having an organization that values and celebrates diversity has many trickle-down effects. It often results in an organization that has antidiscriminatory policies, diversity committees, and diversity information sessions or trainings, as well as more flexible schedules and resources for their minority
employees. One participant described his organization going above and beyond with respect to providing a prayer space,

*And it wasn’t just for Muslims; it was non-denominational… but they asked, “Well, what do you require in the room?” So we don’t require anything. You know, you just go in, put a prayer mat down, and pray, and then leave. Well, so one of the things [they] noticed also is that while you’re making ablution, you have to wash your feet, so yeah, that’s true. So they actually created a ground-mounted sink…They created plumbing in the room, mounted a sink on the ground so you could wash your feet without any kind of health and safety at work violation where you have to worry about if you’ll slip for example. That’s above and beyond…It’s refreshing to see that.*

Organizations that value diversity also make an effort to hire and promote minorities and provide their minority employees with a voice. For example, participants described organizations having open conversations with employees – asking questions about what the organization could provide to allow them to be satisfied and productive workers (e.g., a prayer space), and providing greater clarity on the resources and guidelines that employees can use if they face discrimination at work. In addition, participants mentioned specific ways in which organizations could provide support to their minority employees, such as providing company-wide messages that make it clear that disrespectful or unfair treatment is not tolerated. As one participant described,

*The organization has gone out of their ways to give examples, like things like this are also not acceptable, like making jokes about some one’s religion or terrorist jokes. You wanna make those kinds of jokes outside of the workplace in your own private environment, that’s up to you. We can’t tell you what to say or do. But in the workplace, jokes like that, even though you are confident your coworkers know that it’s a joke, it still
ends up making them uncomfortable, unwanted or just simply in fear for their jobs or anything like that. [So] make sure you don’t do those things.

However, many participants still highlighted the lack of knowledge surrounding Islam in organizations. Participants mentioned how religion is not often discussed at work, and as a result, religion is left out of diversity conversations too. They provided suggestions on how religion could be incorporated into diversity trainings, so that coworkers and managers can be more educated about Muslim practices and potential accommodations, and also noted ways that organizations already practice religious inclusion, such as celebrating different religious holidays or hosting small talks, lunch discussions, or a table in the lobby focused on allowing others to get to know their Muslim coworkers better. For example,

*I’ve had friends who work in different organizations and they’ve actually gotten to put together a PowerPoint and just tell their employees, like whoever can attend, about Islam… There’s so much value in having that interpersonal experience where it’s like, hey, meet a Muslim day. Hey, you hear about all this stuff, but come talk to me, and I’m here for you.*

In contrast, some aspects of organizational culture can clearly demonstrate lack of support for minorities. Many participants described observing the “informal” ways of moving ahead in an organization (e.g., knowing the right people, looking the part) and also described how being Muslim could hinder relationship-building in the workplace. For example, some noted how not drinking alcohol made work social events less comfortable, which sometimes meant going to fewer events and consequently engaging in less networking. Others talked about how the American culture of work is one of constant working – where taking breaks, such as for a daily prayer, is looked down upon. One participant noted,
Sometimes walking away from your work just to take a break, people may not accommodate that or understand it…Someone’s never going to go up and say hey I don’t like you walking away, you know, taking a break, this or that. More so everyone expects you to be working as hard as you can, nonstop.

**Internal psychological factors.** While environmental context can influence the experiences that Muslim Americans have in the workplace, internal psychological factors can influence how they appraise these experiences. **Personal beliefs or perceptions** can impact how individuals perceive the situations that they are in; for example, believing that someone else’s attitudes and opinions can change may influence whether or not a Muslim might engage with them. As one participant described,

> [There are some people], no matter what you do, you’re not going to be able to change their mind. They are the ones that no matter whatever happens, I mean, they have made up their minds a certain way and, you know, we’re not even going to try to change them because it’s a lost effort and a waste of time on our part to even, you know, even make an effort in changing their mind.

These perceptions also influence whether or not an individual asks for accommodations. For example, although some had no issue asking their managers and supervisors for an accommodation (e.g., adjusted break times for prayers, time off for Eid), others were more hesitant – either feeling like they did not have enough power to ask, feeling like the request would be denied, or feeling like it would be an unnecessary request. One participant stated,

> Just something about asking them for a prayer room is just uncomfortable to me. I think it’s a combination of [being a minority and in a lower position], and honestly I don’t know if they would say yes? Like I don’t have the confidence in upper management and
the executives in my office to be able to say, ‘They would probably say yes,’ so I feel like that’s another whole issue that I don’t want to admit that could possibly exist that they could say no to me.

In addition, **previous experiences** can impact how individuals view current experiences. Although positive experiences with others can create a positive precedent, such as a participant being able to change someone’s opinions about Muslims before, negative experiences can also create negative precedents – demonstrating the long-term effects of discrimination. For example, one participant recalled,

*There [was] a time in school when I was praying...and people walked up, and they saw me, and I think I got really made fun of. And I think ever since then, like I really struggled with praying in public. So it’s just, it’s my own personal [thing]. I have my own office where I could close the door, literally, and just pray. I can do it. So it’s just my own fault, and there’s nothing there against the industry or my company. Like, they were actually really accommodating. If there’s an issue, they would make a whole room for me, if they needed to, but this is my own struggle.*

**Individual and social coping.** In appraising their negative interactions, participants would often use a number of **coping strategies.** Some participants discussed how subtle (and sometimes overt) discriminatory incidents occurred so often that they have just gotten used to them or become desensitized, and others discussed strategies, such as letting it go and moving on, trying to reframe the situation, or trying to be understanding of others (see Table 6 for full list). For example, one participant described,
It hurts me sometimes, but then I put myself in that person’s place. If all I encounter and the information I have is from the media always, I would be scared to sit next to a person who [seems] different from the normal population.

Participants also often received social support from their community and/or allies. For example, other people in the workplace would reach out to the participants about something rude, uncomfortable, or inappropriate that may have happened, offering their support or acknowledging the negative interaction. In addition, a few participants noted support in the workplace after broader events like the Muslim ban or a mass shooting. One participant noted,

Our TV [at work] is basically on all the time, so any time an attack happens…my officemates will always like console, if it’s a Muslim person, but like it’s a White person, like a White male, they’re like, here we go, another White guy, it’s always the crazy White dude…like where they acknowledge that it’s not always just a brown Muslim person doing these things, it’s a lot of times someone that looks them, as well.

This support can come from their own community or other minority communities as well. Although many participants mentioned that they did not regularly discuss discriminatory experiences with others in the Muslim community (partially because they did not feel that they experienced formal or overt discrimination in the workplace), it was still clear that having such a community was valued and able to provide support when needed. Some participants also mentioned the kinship they feel with other religious minorities (e.g., Jews), and how they try to support each other, such as by advocating for each other or sharing advice on how to best avoid discrimination.

Situation appraisal. In appraising their situations, participants would describe perceptions of themselves and their identity in the midst of these experiences. Some would
talk about how they felt comfortable and proud talking to others about their religious identity, while others mentioned feeling uncomfortable talking to others about being Muslim and would not volunteer information unless asked. Some participants also talked about feeling nervous, anxious, or unsafe because of their Muslim identity and the anti-Muslim feelings in society. Participants also talked about feeling like they needed to explain themselves and their faith to others, answer everyone’s questions, and prove their American identity – and how this constant scrutinization could feel unfair and make them feel exhausted,

It’s exhausting to always represent, to represent the good, always you know, you’re defending yourself. A lot of times there are things happening in the media, in the news, I go to work and I always feel like I have my guard up. Like do I need to say something? Do I need to explain something, you know?...Even talking about it, it’s exhausting. It’s just – I’ve put in all this work to be friendly with you, I have, I’ve been born and raised in [an American city]. I’m educated, I’m a professional, and it’s like I still have to prove myself.

In addition to how they felt about their religious identities, participants would also describe how these situations impacted their perceptions of others. They mentioned a wide variety of different feelings, from feeling annoyed and frustrated at people’s ignorance and being uncomfortable in everyday interactions to feeling a sense of belonging in inclusive environments and being appreciative of those who created such environments. But overall, there was a main theme of wanting people to ask questions instead of keeping them in, and usually understanding that others’ biases often come from a lack of education or exposure.

Identity management behaviors. Participants would also vary in how they would respond to these experiences and how they would subsequently manage their religious identities
at work. Participants would utilize a number of different identity management strategies, including acknowledging their Muslim identity, highlighting their similarity to others and humanizing Muslims, being more friendly, overcompensating to fit in or make others more comfortable, providing individuating information, and passing as non-Muslim when possible (see Table 6 for representative quotes of these strategies). Some participants would even adjust their religious practices at work, such as skipping prayers, praying in less ideal spaces (e.g., car, stairwell), or changing their appearance (e.g., removing headscarves). Although some participants mentioned that they were okay doing this, that it just seemed like a necessary part of their jobs and fitting in, others mentioned how adapting their religious practices might make life easier in the short-term, but it also felt like it was changing their identity. One female participant described,

_I took [the hijab] off for a while, but then I put it back on. And I felt like I was changing who I was for a job, and I don’t think anything is worth that._

Participants also mentioned coming up with alternative ways of not having explain their religious practices. One male participant described how he sometimes handles shaking hands with women,

_The way I try to avoid it, for example saying, ‘I’m sick’, even though I may not be sick…That also can bite you because you might forget to say it in times of gathering and they see you shaking others’ hands. So, it gets really tricky. Also at times I kind of occupy my hands with other stuff. You know if I have like a folder and a binder and a backpack. Even though I can put the backpack on my shoulders and put everything else in the one hand and shake the other person’s hand. I will elect to put the backpack in my hand and pretend that my hands are occupied and I can’t shake the other person’s hand._
There were also two contrasting ways in which Muslim Americans would generally respond to their workplace experiences, either by engaging or disengaging. Engaging would include behaviors such as answering questions and educating others, making an effort to connect with others, being active in the greater community, and speaking up for one’s religious identity. Many participants discussed the difficulties in deciding when it is appropriate to speak up and which fights to pick. They also mentioned a fine line between standing up for oneself and negatively impacting relationships with others. One participant described,

*I walk a fine line between speaking up, standing up, pushing the envelope, but also, I don’t want to jeopardize my own career...you know, people say that there’s no retaliation, but there [is]. There’s a stigma, you’re a problem person or whatever.*

On the other hand, disengaging involves pulling away from these kinds of discussions and sometimes even self-selecting out of situations that may be uncomfortable or discriminatory. For example, one participant described how he makes sure to “put [himself] in certain areas where [he] knows that there’s a lot of diversity, and generally high levels of tolerance.” Others discussed how they have given up trying to explain their religious practices or requesting accommodations, because people do not seem to remember or care. These types of behavior are understandable; however, other participants encouraged Muslims to not stay within their bubbles. One participant stated,

*A lot of Muslims live in their little bubble, you know. I live in [city], that’s a huge bubble. You’ve got your mosques there, you’ve got everything, you’ve got everything there – your food, everything, your restaurants, and you never have to leave. But that’s not good, not right now, I mean, that’s never good, but definitely not right now.*
Research Question 2: How does gender influence the workplace experiences of Muslim Americans, and consequently, their experience of religion at work?

Characteristics of Muslim identity. In addition to environmental and interpersonal factors that influenced the participants’ experiences, there were many individual characteristics that played a role as well. The main individual characteristic I set out to examine was gender, and participants noted a number of different ways that gender could influence the Muslim American experience. One of the most notable differences was in dress; Muslim women often wear the headscarf, which makes their religion more visible, as compared to Muslim men, who are often able to pass as non-Muslim if they would like (although many mentioned their name as giving their Muslim identity away). As a result, women who wear the hijab may feel more pressure to represent Islam in a positive light. As one female participant noted,

You kind of have to put your best foot forward, you kind of have to make that extra effort. You know, if you’re having a bad day and you just snap at someone, you don’t want to - I mean that’s fine, everybody has that, but for the most part, you want to be mindful of what you’re saying and what you’re doing. When I’m having a bad day, it’s not necessarily just me having a bad day. It’s all of Islam cutting people off in traffic.

Participants also mentioned how the headscarf and its clear tie to Islam might also prime others to the gender stereotypes that Muslim women in particular face, i.e., that they are oppressed and need to be saved. Some female participants noted that they often faced men who were uncertain of how to interact with them based on their misconceptions of Muslim women. For example, one participant described,

I have noticed a lot of times, men especially, will fail to give me eye contact when I speak to them, maybe because they feel like they’re averting their gaze in respect for me, which
may just be a misunderstanding, but other times, when I’m in a group, I’ll say something and people may disregard it or people may talk over me. A lot of times if I ask a question in the group, they’ll respond but they won’t give me any eye contact.

Some participants also discussed the different cultural expectations for Muslim men and women, which were very similar to the gender biases that many women face around the world. For example, one male participant noted, “[traditionally] Muslim women have just been, you know, homemakers, staying at home with the kids, and you know that’s their responsibility. But nowadays it feels like very different.” Indeed, many female participants noted how many of their experiences of bias in the workplace could likely be attributed to overcoming gender biases rather than issues surrounding their religion. As one stated,

> There’s always female discrimination in the workforce, and it’s because you’re female, but not because you’re a Muslim… it’s really from the feminine female standpoint, that there’s still a male-dominated, male-hierarchy kind of society. Men tend to, their voices tend to be heard more. I would say that men often talk over and cut off women in important conversations.

Although gender was the focus of my research question, many participants also highlighted the importance of race in their experiences. Similar to gender, there are many racial stereotypes and biases at large in the workplace, and some participants described how Islam has become racialized, even though there is actually no racial or ethnic majority in the Muslim American population (Pew Research Center, 2017a). This can result in other people again being confused when they find out someone who does not look “Muslim” (i.e., Arab, Pakistani) is Muslim, and can invite probing questions to understand why that person is Muslim. For example, one White participant described,
I get lots of questions that my brown-eyed friends don’t get. [People] feel, somehow, freer to ask me questions because I obviously didn’t get born this way. Or at least, according to them, I didn’t. So you get a lot more curious questions.

And although not many of the participants identified as LGBTQ, those that did highlighted an important factor that can influence experiences, in that having an identity that is stigmatized within the Muslim community can create a doubly stigmatized and challenging experience. One participant noted,

Yeah there’s kind of a taboo to talk about [LGBTQ issues] in the Muslim community…

Not too long ago, I was requesting to be added to a Muslim group on social media. And the moderator was like, ‘We want to ask you some questions. We don’t want anybody with some kind of agenda to be added.’ And I was like ‘Oh okay, do you ask this question to everybody who joins? Or is it because you saw that I was gay and Muslim?’ And they were like ‘Well, we don’t want that discussed at all in the group. So if you want to be added you can’t talk about that.’

In addition to the different intersecting identities that Muslim Americans can hold, another identity characteristic that can impact their interactions with others is how they maintain their religious appearance. For women, this is often in the form of the headscarf, and for men, this is most often in the form of a beard – although some men wear a kufi as well. Female participants described how wearing a headscarf could invite both uncertainty from others in how they should interact with the participants, as well as many questions. For example, one participant described,
Because I wear a scarf, they would always, or if I walk into a patient's room, they're just unsure. And so not everyone, but some are...I can tell...they're not really sure about me, just from looking at me.

Many participants acknowledged how their experiences might be different if they wore or did not wear the headscarf; for example, one participant noted, “I think I've actually had people open up, and have conversations [about religious topics] with me...And I think part of that is because they don't realize how practicing I am, because I don't wear a headscarf.” Similar notes were made from men about keeping a beard or wearing a kufi, and how their experiences might be different if they adjusted their appearance. It was also interesting to note the role of cultural norms, such as in Muslim-dominated countries where it is normative to veil as a woman or keep a beard as a man – in these situations, participants mentioned how they might be treated worse or respected less if they did not wear a headscarf or keep a beard.

However, in the U.S., participants noted that wearing the headscarf or keeping a beard could be hindrances to their job opportunities, as well as the pressure that they could feel about removing their headscarves or shaving their beards. This pressure could be external, internal, or both. As one female participant noted,

[People] would talk about how you can’t really go that far when you wear a scarf, because your scarf makes people not want to approach you...it’s just like oh with that thing on your head, you’re never going to get to go as far as you want to go, like you either have to work harder or take it off, you know? And a lot of people make you feel as if you have to take it off...that’s hard to process, because it’s just a piece of fabric. It just makes you feel like no matter how much good you do, that piece of fabric on your head is going to hold you back.
A similar situation is described by a male participant,

_There was an interview where they were, at that time I had a longer beard, and nothing
directly says that you have to shave your beard to get a job, and there were plenty of
hints dropped about when I planned on shaving at any time, whether or not I was going
to keep my beard the way it was, that kind of stuff. There was nothing specifically
demanded and everything else in the interview went well, but I kind of had a feeling that
that was one of the reasons why I didn’t end up getting the job offer from them._

Participants also mentioned a number of other _religious practices_, and how the different
degrees to which they practiced them as individuals could influence their workplace experiences.
Participants discussed practices such as prayers, fasting, religious holidays, food restrictions, not
drinking alcohol, and not shaking hands with individuals of the opposite sex. The diversity of
ways that Muslims practice can sometimes put Muslim Americans in difficult situations when
trying to explain their practices in the workplace. For example, one participant described,

_My colleagues will sometimes say, well I worked with another Muslim on a project last
year, and he or she drank, so why can’t you? So it’s almost now you have to justify your
actions…And so then you’re having to balance, you know, being able to defend your
actions without, for lack of a better term, throwing shade at how someone else practices
the same religion._

Lastly, some participants also noted the role that _personality_ played in their experiences.
Those that mentioned personality would often talk about how being more open and social has
helped them connect more with others and counteract stereotypes (especially with Muslim
women, who are often perceived as reserved and oppressed). For example, one female
participant discussed how she tries to make people more comfortable in their interactions with her as a hijabi,

*I think, like in general, you can tell we’re pretty talkative people, and if you met me for five minutes, whoever, I try to, not intentionally, it’s just my regular personality, to be friendly and they’ll feed off that.*

**Research Question 3: How do out-group members, as coworker and leader allies, influence the social identities and experiences of Muslims at work?**

**Interpersonal context.** Participants had conflicting views on whether organizational context or individual beliefs were more important in how others interacted with Muslims in the workplace. For example, one participant argued that “whether people are prejudiced or not prejudiced, their personal feelings would matter less if you give them the kind of training so that people are aware of what they are supposed to do,” while another stated, “There’s only so much the company can do; the individual carries their own biases to the workplace.” However, regardless of what influenced the behaviors of others in the workplace, it was clear that interpersonal context played an important role in the participants’ experiences.

Fortunately, there were many examples of **coworkers as allies.** Coworkers could engage in advocacy behaviors, which included confronting discrimination, educating others and helping provide understanding or counteract negative stereotypes about Muslims, and advocating for Muslim peers in meetings or when they might be up for promotion. Coworkers could also engage in support behaviors, which included being accepting of their Muslim coworkers and their practices, acknowledging the challenges and biases they might be facing, asking and listening (instead of making assumptions), educating themselves and becoming more aware, being more inclusive in work or non-work events, being supportive of religious practices, and making sure
that Muslims do not feel like a burden because of their accommodations. See Table 4 for representative quotes of these behaviors. Another important ally behavior included simply treating Muslims like normal people. As one participant described,

We don’t want to be treated differently. We just want the same respect that everyone wants, you know, the same type of benefits that they offer to their employees. Obviously if you don’t want anything discriminatory happening…but as individuals, we don’t really need any special treatment, we don’t want to be treated differently either.

There were also multiple examples of organizational leaders as allies. In addition to the behaviors that coworkers engaged in, participants cited the importance of leadership setting the tone of the organization and being able to provide protection for minority employees. Leaders are able to set a tone that is inclusive, diversity-oriented, and antidiscriminatory. They also often have more power to instrumentally support religious practices, such as providing a prayer space, granting time to take prayer breaks, and allowing for a modified schedule during Ramadan and time off for Eid. See Table 5 for a full list of these behaviors.

However, there were also a number of stories involving unsupportive coworkers and leaders. For example, there were coworkers who perceived certain accommodations as unfair or as a burden, and there were times when accommodations were not provided. One participant described,

I was going to take the day off [for Eid]. I was told that it would be deducted from my personal time off, which I didn’t have a problem with, but we had an important meeting that [my boss] didn’t want me to miss, so he didn’t approve it.

There were also instances in which leadership failed to adequately respond to discrimination claims. One participant recalls a manager telling her that the person saying
discriminatory comments about Muslims was simply “having a bad day” and that she should let it go. In addition, there were other individuals who simply were passive bystanders when the participants were dealing with prejudice or discrimination, and others who may have been well-intentioned but did not execute their allyship in an effective manner. For example, one participant described an interaction with a group of coworkers talking about alcohol and making drinks,

*Someone was like, ‘Oh, you don’t drink, I’m so sorry...we’re talking about it so much’ and I mean it was almost like, I didn’t really care? I mean it’s fine, talk about whatever you want, you don’t have to go out of your way or anything, you can still feel free to carry on. It was almost like, this may almost be an example of someone who had a good intention to sort of be an ally in that sense, but it was kind of a weird, awkward social situation, where I’m just like ‘Oh it’s fine.’ I was totally indifferent, it wasn’t making me uncomfortable at all, but my name got called, then it became a little uncomfortable.*

**Discussion**

Drawing on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995), this research explores how Muslim Americans currently experience and manage their religion at work, as well as how other identities (i.e., gender) and interactions with other people (i.e., coworkers and leaders as allies) influence these experiences. Due to the current sociopolitical climate in the U.S., research on Muslim Americans at work is growing, and multiple studies have found discrimination against Muslim Americans throughout the employment process (e.g., fewer interview callbacks, lower salary recommendations, lower hireability ratings; Bartkoski et al., 2018). However, previous work has yet to examine the day-to-day workplace experiences of Muslim Americans, and this research utilizes semi-structured interviews with 70 Muslim
Americans to better understand not only what happens in these everyday interactions, but also how these interactions impact their identity management as Muslim Americans in the workplace.

The findings from the interviews helped provide insight into the original three research questions that instigated this study (see Table 7 for a summary of findings by research question). In looking at the first question (How do Muslim Americans experience their religion at work?), it is clear that many participants have had positive experiences with feeling included and not experiencing discrimination in the workplace. They generally have not had issues getting accommodations in the workplace (e.g., for prayers, fasting, Eid) and feel comfortable with others knowing that they are Muslim. However, not all experiences have been positive. There were also patterns of all types of discrimination within the interviews – from feelings of being passed up for jobs or promotions to overtly anti-Muslim comments or questions to subtle indicators of discomfort and uncertainty in interactions. These types of experiences can all lead Muslim Americans to feel less comfortable being open about their religious identity at work and feel pressured to fit in more. Indeed, many participants talked about how sometimes they adjust their religious practices or often feel hesitant about asking for accommodations, in order to better fit into the American work environment.

Patterns in the interviews also provided insight into environmental and interpersonal factors that may contribute to more positive or negative interactions in the workplace. Within the environment, factors like having more than one Muslim in the organization or more diversity in general could help create more positive interactions, as well as simply being in a more diverse city where people have more exposure to a variety of individuals. Organizations with leaders, policies, and practices that condemn discrimination and value inclusion also set a tone that celebrates diversity and encourages employees to be understanding of each other’s differences.
However, organizational culture is only one aspect, albeit an important one, that can affect someone’s workplace experience. A person’s workplace interactions are also directly impacted by the specific individuals they are interacting with. Although these individuals are likely influenced by their organization’s culture, they do not need to be. For example, a coworker or manager could go above and beyond, such as by educating themselves and being proactively supportive of Muslim practices (e.g., making sure a prayer room is available if a Muslim employee needs it). On the flip side, even if the overall environment is positive and inclusive, individual coworkers or managers could be prejudiced and discriminatory (e.g., failing to provide accommodations, making rude or inappropriate comments). As a result, the specific people that Muslims interact with on a day-to-day basis can also significantly impact how they perceive their workplace experiences.

However, in general, similar to other types of minorities in the workplace (e.g., race, gender, disability), the Muslim American participants described feeling like they needed to work harder in the workplace to prove themselves and counter the negative perceptions that others may hold. As a result, participants often engage in a number of identity management strategies, such as acknowledging their Muslim identity, highlighting their similarity to others, being friendlier, and providing individuating information (see Table 6 for full list). Participants mentioned that they would choose different strategies based on the situation and how others seemed to be responding to their Muslim identity. It was also clear that, over time, consistently engaging in these identity management strategies had long-term impacts on the participants. Some talked about accepting this situation as part of their identity and being okay with it; however, they, along with many others, would still express their frustration and exhaustion in constantly answering questions and educating others. Participants talked about how some
Muslim Americans have disengaged and stay primarily within a “Muslim bubble.” This emphasizes how others’ biases and prejudices – no matter how overt or subtle – can push minorities to feel like they do not belong and reinforce group divides. That being said, the majority of participants discussed their willingness to answer questions and engage in discussions about their Muslim identity, and many wished that religion was more openly talked about in the workplace to improve dialogue and understanding.

For the second research question (How does gender influence the workplace experiences of Muslim Americans, and consequently, their experience of religion at work?), gender issues at work tended to be more commonly brought up among the female participants, who often cited that the biases they faced in the workplace were likely more due to their gender than their religious identity. However, they also acknowledged how the intersection of religious identity and gender could also influence how people perceived and interacted with them in the workplace. For example, female participants talked about how people were often surprised if they were not timid and soft-spoken, as well as how some men did not know how to interact with them (e.g., not knowing if they could make eye contact, speak, or shake hands with Muslim women), which often led to awkward and uncomfortable interactions.

Another apparent difference between Muslim men and women is religious appearance. Many Muslim women wear a headscarf, which is often a giveaway for their religious identity. Although Muslim men may keep a beard, wear the kufi, or have a name that signals their Muslim identity, it is often easiest for people to identify a Muslim if she is a woman wearing a headscarf. As a result, these women often cannot escape their religious identity and questions from others about being Muslim. Along with feelings that wearing a headscarf could result in fewer job opportunities, this could lead to both external and internal pressure to take it off; however, the
majority of women also emphasized that it was an important part of their identity that they were proud of and not willing to change just to make their lives easier.

Lastly, for the third research question (How do out-group members, as coworker and leader allies, influence the social identities and experiences of Muslims at work?), participants discussed mostly positive experiences with the people that they work with. They talked about the support they received from their coworkers and upper management regarding their religious practices, and the importance of these individuals setting an organizational culture that values diversity and does not tolerate discrimination in any form. These positive interactions helped participants feel a greater sense of belonging and more comfortable expressing their religious identity at work.

Conversely, negative interactions also have a significant impact on how Muslim Americans experience and manage their religion at work. For example, if coworkers and upper management are not supportive regarding religious practices and fail to provide accommodations (e.g., prayer breaks, a day off for Eid), this can markedly change how comfortable Muslims are expressing their religious identity at work and negatively influence their overall workplace experiences. In addition, there are subtle ways in which Muslims can feel like an out-group at work, such as receiving ignorant questions about their religion or feeling less comfortable at social and networking events centered around alcohol. These are often unintentional ways that organizations are signaling to their employees about who they value and are trying to advance (i.e., not Muslims). However, from these interviews, there are clear ways that both coworkers and organizational leaders can help ameliorate some of these biases, which I will further highlight in the Practical Implications section.
Limitations and Future Directions

This study provided rich information pertaining to the everyday experiences of Muslim Americans at work; however, it was not without limitations. First, although this participant sample highlighted the diversity that exists in the Muslim American population, the group was still relatively homogeneous – largely urban, educated, and Asian. This could influence the experiences that were represented in the interviews; for example, many participants lived in diverse cities and worked in diverse organizations, which could create a skew towards more positive experiences since they were surrounded by people who had likely been more exposed to and accepting of Muslims in their community. Although many participants talked about the importance of diversity, exposure, and education, there was a lack of participants working on a day-to-day basis in less diverse areas and organizations. Future research should try to include a more diverse group of participants to better understand how context might influence the Muslim American experience at work. However, it is important to note that, even with a largely urban, educated, and Asian sample, there was a broad variety of experiences and perspectives that helps contribute to the existing literature on this topic.

Second, although the interview questions were based on the research questions, it is possible that the interview questions may have narrowed the focus of the interviews too quickly and limited the scope of the findings. For example, the first question (As a Muslim American woman/man, what are the biggest challenges that you face in the workplace?) may have prompted the participants to think about negative experiences from the get-go, as opposed to thinking more broadly of how they experience their religious identity at work. As a result, future researchers should be careful when wording their questions to make sure they are not accidentally leading. In this study, it is important to note that, although the questions may not
have been perfect, participants still talked about their experiences more generally, and many would counter this first question by discussing how their workplace experiences were overall positive.

Third, even though this study was focused on Muslim Americans and their workplace experiences, it may be interesting for future researchers to examine the perspectives of other individuals that might be mistaken as Muslim (e.g., Sikhs, Hindus) and how they manage their religious identities at work. Because of the prevalence of media coverage on Islam, it is likely that negative stereotypes surrounding Muslims are stronger than those surrounding Sikhs or Hindus. As a result, future research could examine if these stereotypes and biases influence how these other groups present themselves at work, such as if they deliberately try to distance themselves from Muslims and clarify their religious affiliations or if they simply try to avoid discussing religion altogether.

**Theoretical Implications**

This study helped build on social identity theory by incorporating an under-examined identity (i.e., religion) and examining how individuals in different social identity groups can facilitate positive intergroup interactions. The idea that different contexts and situations can influence how an individual wants to publicly identify (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995) was further supported, and findings from these interviews gave rise to a conceptual model that integrates social identity, minority stress, and identity management theories in considering the experiences of Muslim Americans at work (see Figure 3). Similar to the identity management model from Clair and colleagues (2005), this model emphasizes the importance of environmental and interpersonal context, as well as individual differences, in determining how someone manages a stigmatized identity at work. Similar to the minority stress model from Meyer (2003), the model
also adds in workplace interactions, including those that may activate minority stress processes (e.g., discrimination). This updated model notes how environmental and interpersonal context (and other identity characteristics, such as gender, religious appearance, religious practices, and personality) first play a role in shaping Muslim Americans’ workplace interactions. These interactions, along with internal psychological factors (such as personal beliefs, previous experiences, and valence and integration of Muslim identity) and coping processes, impact how these individuals appraise these experiences, and this appraisal then shapes how they respond. Responses can include identity management strategies, as well as how much Muslim Americans continue to engage at the workplace and with their coworkers. These decisions on how to respond will likely then influence future workplace interactions. This is a preliminary model, and future research can examine the specific processes involved and the relationships among workplace interactions, individual and contextual factors that help shape these interactions, and the appraisal of and responses to these interactions. It would also be interesting to see if the same model holds for other religious minorities (e.g., Jews, Buddhists, Hindus) or stigmatized invisible identities (e.g., sexual orientation, mental illness).

Future research can also continue building on these findings. For example, future research can empirically test the factors that might differentiate positive and negative workplace experiences for Muslim Americans, such as looking at how having organizational policies, social support, a diverse city, or more than one Muslim in the workplace can impact outcomes like belonging, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and performance in Muslim American employees. It would also be interesting to examine how specific organizational practices (e.g., celebrating diverse religious holidays, holding information sessions on Islam, incorporating religion into diversity trainings) can impact these work-related outcomes, as well as how comfortable Muslim
Americans feel with being open about their faith at work. Many participants discussed adjusting the way they interact in order to fit in better or make others feel more comfortable, and sometimes these adjustments included changing their religious practices in order to avoid uncomfortable conversations or interactions. Some talked about how this behavior has impacted them over time; however, it would be important to empirically examine the long-term impact, such as on mental health and job performance, of not being able to fully express one’s religious identity at work, and how this might be similar or different from other stigmatized invisible identities (e.g., sexual orientation; Ragins et al., 2007).

The findings also provide a foundation for further exploring intersectionality in the Muslim American population. These interviews demonstrated that gender does play a role in how Muslim Americans are perceived and interacted with; people hold different stereotypes about Muslim men and women, and the degree to which someone can tell if a man or woman is Muslim often differs because of the prominence of the headscarf. Future research can confirm if the stereotypes surrounding Muslim men and women are significantly different from the stereotypes surrounding prototypical men and women (i.e., White). For example, are Muslim women perceived as more timid than White women, and are Muslim men perceived as more aggressive than White men? Do these perceptions change based on their religious appearance (e.g., wearing a headscarf or kufi, keeping a beard), such that more prominent religious appearances signal more exaggerated stereotypes? And what do these stereotypes mean for Muslim Americans’ hireability and promotability in the workplace? Some of the female participants also talked about how people often seem confused or uncomfortable when they are interacting with Muslim women, because they are not sure what is appropriate and what might be offensive. It would be interesting to see if providing others with more information about the
diversity within Islam and individual practices would help ameliorate some of this uncertainty and discomfort by giving them a sort of social script (Avery, Richeson, Hebl, & Ambady, 2009).

Intersectionality within the Muslim American population is also more than gender. Participants in this study mentioned other identities, such as race, sexual orientation, and immigrant status, and future research should continue exploring how other identities intersect with being Muslim in the workplace. For example, the Muslim identity has become racialized over the years, such that the stereotypical image of a Muslim is someone from Pakistan or the Middle East, even though Islam spans a wide variety of races and ethnicities. These expectations can give rise to differential interactions with people who do not seem like “typical” Muslims in the U.S., such as White, Black, or Hispanic Muslims, and it would be interesting to see how this deviation from expectation may impact how someone interacts with the individual (e.g., more comfortable, more curious).

Lastly, the findings continue to build on the nascent literature on allies in the workplace. Similar to other work, this study demonstrates that it is important for allies to be willing to be uncomfortable and ask questions when needed. It is clear that allyship is appreciated but it is not always clear what the most effective form of allyship is – this often depends on the individual target and what they prefer. Adding to a growing area of allyship literature, future researchers can continue examining how targets perceive ally behaviors and what boundary conditions might exist. For example, some targets like their identity to be acknowledged, while others may not. Similar to how these targets often search for cues among coworkers and organizational leaders about whether or not they should disclose a stigmatized identity (e.g., Law et al., 2011; Ragins, 2008), are there cues that allies can search for when understanding what would be most effective for the individuals they are trying to help? For instance, if someone seems to be a more private
individual in general (e.g., does not share much about their personal life at work), perhaps this could be a cue that they may prefer more private forms of allyship. Future research could examine the different types of cues allies may encounter and how those may inform allyship behaviors.

**Practical Implications**

In addition to building on social identity theory for Muslim Americans, this research highlights how although many minorities or individuals with stigmatized identities may face similar challenges in the workplace (e.g., feeling left out, working harder to prove themselves, potentially needing accommodations), the way that these challenges manifest are different for each social group. For example, Muslim Americans may have prayer needs, religious holidays, and religious dress that impact their experiences in different ways than individuals with disabilities, sexual minorities, or older employees are impacted by their social identities. As a result, it is valuable for researchers and practitioners to continue understanding how to better support minorities in the workplace, as well as how different minority groups have different experiences and needs.

This research has several practical implications for Muslim Americans themselves and individuals trying to serve as allies. Previous research has discussed general target and ally strategies, and these strategies are sometimes examined for specific groups, such as women and racial minorities (e.g., Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Ruggs et al., 2011; Sabat et al., 2013). However, strategies for targets and allies have yet to be examined for religious minorities like Muslim Americans. The interviews uncovered multiple identity management and coping strategies that Muslim Americans use in the workplace in order to minimize negative interactions, improve their relationships with others, and better process their experiences.
Participants also highlighted effective ally behaviors that they experienced from both coworkers and organizational leaders. See Tables 4-6 for a full list of these individual and ally strategies. These findings can help Muslim Americans understand the different identity management coping strategies others have used and found beneficial, and also help potential allies understand what may be specifically useful for Muslim Americans.

That being said, because every individual is different, one of the main ally behaviors consistently mentioned throughout the interviews was making sure to ask, rather than assume, what practices a specific individual engages in and what support might be best. Both coworkers and organizational leaders should understand that what people find helpful may vary across different individuals. However, it is also interesting to note that inclusive practices, such as allowing for more flexible schedules, making social activities less focused on alcohol, and providing vegetarian options when catering food, rarely go unappreciated – and that these types of practices not only benefit Muslim Americans but most other employees too.

**Conclusion**

Over the past few decades, Muslim Americans have faced persistent discrimination, both overt and subtle, in the workplace. As a result, even though many Muslims consider religion to be an important part of their lives, they may hesitate to talk about or express their religion at work. Due to the prevalence of this issue, research on Muslim Americans at work is rapidly growing; however, this study takes a different approach by using semi-structured interviews to get an in-depth perspective on the everyday work experiences of Muslim Americans. These interviews demonstrated that although organizations are generally inclusive and supportive of providing accommodations, there are still consistent patterns of how Muslims are treated as an out-group in American workplaces. However, these individuals also have many ideas on how to
make the workplace more inclusive if organizations, leaders, and coworkers just ask, and it is clear that these suggestions would not only help improve the work experiences of Muslim Americans, but all Americans as well.
References


Table 1

*Number of Religion-Focused Articles in the Top Journals in I/O Psychology*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Title</th>
<th>Number of articles (N = 58)</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Journal of Applied Psychology</em></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Psychology</td>
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<td><em>Academy of Management Journal</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Journal of Vocational Behavior</em></td>
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</table>

*Note.* Search terms were based on Tracey’s (2012) similar review; for search terms, I used “religion,” “religious,” “faith,” “church,” “mosque,” “synagogue,” “temple,” “Christian,” “Muslim,” “Islam,” “Jewish,” “Sikh,” “Buddhism,” “Hindu,” and “spirituality.”
Table 2

*Sample Demographics*

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<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>Black or African American</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
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<td>11-15 years</td>
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<td>16-25 years</td>
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<td>More than 25 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Diversity of Workplace</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Very diverse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat diverse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not very diverse</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
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<td><strong>Sect of Islam</strong></td>
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<td>Sunni</td>
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<td>Shia</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Centrality of Religious Identity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Very central</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat central</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>Not very central</td>
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Research Question 1: How do Muslim Americans experience their religion at work?

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<th>Line-by-line Codes</th>
<th>Focused Codes</th>
<th>Aggregate Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Others: accepting</td>
<td>Acceptance and belonging</td>
<td>Positive workplace interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others: inclusive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding and awareness come from getting to know each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Didn’t really face discrimination at work</td>
<td>Normal treatment</td>
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<td>Allies: treat like a normal person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allies: supportive of religious practices</td>
<td>Support of religious practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others: everyone supporting each other</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: formal: denied accommodations or benefits</td>
<td>Negative work experiences: formal</td>
<td>Negative workplace interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination: formal: fired for Muslim identity or practices</td>
<td>discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: formal: not selected for interview, job, or promotion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: formal: declined service because of Muslim identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: overt: discriminatory comments</td>
<td>Negative work experiences: overt</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discrimination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination: subtle: avoid eye contact</td>
<td>Negative work experiences: subtle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination: subtle: being talked over</td>
<td>discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: subtle: ignorant comments/question</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: subtle: looks</td>
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<td>Discrimination: subtle: negative tone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: subtle: not intentional but still excluding</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: subtle: offensive jokes</td>
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<td>Discrimination: subtle: people making assumptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: subtle: people not understanding spectrum of Muslims</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: subtle: people reluctant to interact or avoid interacting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line-by-line Codes</td>
<td>Focused Codes</td>
<td>Aggregate Themes</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: subtle: people wanting to fix/save/protect participant</td>
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<td>Negative workplace interactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: subtle: struggle to balance work and faith</td>
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<td>(cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: subtle: uncertainty/discomfort/rudeness from others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim stereotypes</td>
<td>Stereotypes and prejudice</td>
<td>Environmental context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-Muslim feelings or biases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media portrayals</td>
<td>Exposure to and education surrounding</td>
<td>Islam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others: Lack of awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Others: Lack of empathy or understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others: Lack of exposure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Others: Lack of knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work environment: diverse</td>
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<td>Organizational diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work environment: non-diverse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization: antidiscriminatory policies</td>
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<td>Organizational culture and policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization: values and celebrates diversity</td>
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<td>Organization: diversity committees</td>
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<td>Organization: flexible schedule</td>
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<td>Organization: diversity information sessions or trainings</td>
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<td>Organization: public display of support</td>
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<td>Organization: providing resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work environment: Religion often left out of diversity conversations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work environment: Religion as a topic of discussion</td>
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<td>Work: Informal ways of moving ahead in an organization</td>
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<td>Work: Social events</td>
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<td>Work: Culture of always working</td>
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<td>Event: 9/11</td>
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<td>Sociopolitical climate</td>
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<td>Event: Attacks involving Muslims</td>
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<td>Event: Muslim ban</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event: Election of President Trump</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experiences and perceptions changing over time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line-by-line Codes</td>
<td>Focused Codes</td>
<td>Aggregate Themes</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belief: can make a difference as an individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belief: some people won’t change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination: hard to prove</td>
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<td>Discrimination: not sure how to handle</td>
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<td>Discrimination: sensitivity to discrimination</td>
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<td>Speaking up: uncertain of outcome</td>
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<td>Previous experiences: negative</td>
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<td>Coping: focus on positive</td>
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<td>Individual and social coping</td>
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<td>Coping: let it go and move on</td>
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<td>Coping: try to be understanding</td>
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<td>Coping: try to reframe</td>
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<td>Allies: supportive after incident</td>
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<td>Experience: minorities supporting each other</td>
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<td>Experience: minorities supporting each other: with how to deal with discrimination</td>
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<td>Others: social support</td>
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<td>Identity: comfortable talking to others about Muslim identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identity: uncomfortable talking to others about Muslim identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling: positive: proud</td>
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<td>Feeling: negative: exhausted</td>
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<td>Feeling: negative: unfair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling: feel like need to explain self and faith</td>
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<td>Feeling: feel like need to prove American identity</td>
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<td>Feeling: feel responsibility to answer questions</td>
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<td>Feeling: not comfortable asking for help or support</td>
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<td>Situation appraisal</td>
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<td>Line-by-line Codes</td>
<td>Focused Codes</td>
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<td>Feeling: negative: uncomfortable</td>
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<td>Feeling: negative: unsafe</td>
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<td>Feeling: positive: belonging, comfortable</td>
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<td>Feeling: positive: appreciative</td>
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<td>Others: want people to ask questions</td>
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<td>Others: not sure how others will respond about Muslim identity</td>
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<td>Behavior: identity management: acknowledgement</td>
<td>Identity management strategies</td>
<td>Identity management behaviors</td>
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<td>Behavior: identity management: adjust religious practices at work</td>
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<td>Behavior: identity management: be more friendly</td>
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<td>Behavior: identity management: counteract negative portrayals</td>
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<td>Behavior: identity management: highlight similarity to others, humanize Muslims</td>
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<td>Behavior: identity management: open and frank about identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavior: identity management: overcompensate to fit in or make others more comfortable</td>
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<td>Behavior: identity management: passing</td>
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<td>Behavior: identity management: provide individuating information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavior: identity management: work harder to prove self at work</td>
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<td>Behavior: answering questions</td>
<td>Engaging</td>
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<td>Behavior: civic and community engagement</td>
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<td>Behavior: educating others</td>
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<td>Behavior: make effort to connect w/ others</td>
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<td>Behavior: speaking up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being a spokesperson/representative/role model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavior: avoid situations that could be uncomfortable or discriminatory</td>
<td>Disengaging</td>
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<td>Behavior: don’t speak up</td>
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<td>Behavior: give up</td>
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<td>Muslim apathy/bubble</td>
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</table>
### Research Question 2: How does gender influence the workplace experiences of Muslim Americans, and consequently, their experience of religion at work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line-by-line Codes</th>
<th>Focused Codes</th>
<th>Aggregate Themes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender differences in dress</td>
<td>Intersectionality with gender</td>
<td>Characteristics of Muslim identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender differences in cultural expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender: bias in the workplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racialization of Islam</td>
<td>Intersectionality with race</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race: bias in the workplace</td>
<td>Intersectionality with sexual orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intrafaith prejudice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wearing the headscarf or kufi</td>
<td>Prominence: religious appearance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keeping a beard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differential treatment because of religious appearance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Removing the headscarf or kufi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shaving a beard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation requests</td>
<td>Prominence: religious practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim practices: not drinking alcohol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim practices: food restrictions</td>
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<td>Muslim practices: prayers</td>
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<td>Muslim practices: fasting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim practices: religious holiday</td>
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<td>Muslim practices: shaking hands w/ women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having an open and social personality helps with interactions</td>
<td>Personality</td>
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### Research Question 3: How do out-group members, as coworker and leader allies, influence the social identities and experiences of Muslims at work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line-by-line Codes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allies: advocacy behaviors</td>
<td>Coworkers as allies</td>
<td>Interpersonal context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allies: support behaviors</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Allies: not making assumptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allies: treat like a normal person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership: diversity-oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership: provide protection</td>
<td>Organizational leaders as allies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership: sets tone of organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership: supportive</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Line-by-line Codes</td>
<td>Focused Codes</td>
<td>Aggregate Themes</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive of religious practices</td>
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<td>Interpersonal context (cont.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allies: ineffective: bystander</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allies: ineffective: not genuine/conditional allyship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allies: ineffective: well-intentioned but poor outcome</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership: unsupportive of religious practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership: fail to adequately respond to issues of discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsupportive coworkers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsupportive leaders</td>
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### Coworker Ally Behaviors with Representative Quotes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Representative Quote</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advocating Behaviors</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Confronting discrimination        | “And a lot of the time... they’ll speak for you. Or they’ll do it when you’re gone, and they’ll just be like “By the way, stop doing that.” They’ll tell the other people.”  
“There was a time where someone was being kind of belligerent with me, and trying to ask questions that were inappropriate. It was actually going back to that whole thing with the scarf where they ask an innocent question, but I think their intent was to put down me wearing my scarf and indirectly my religion...And I had a coworker who was there with me and she stepped in, and she said ‘maybe this is not the right time to talk about it’ and she changed the topic to something more relevant, to the work that we were doing.”  
“A customer came...and she made comments about 'You don’t belong here'...they had to call someone, and [the] manager got rid of the lady...said ‘we don’t do that over here,’ and they made her leave.” |
|  • Direct confronting             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|  • Redirecting conversation       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|  • Taking over interaction        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|  [from Muslim target]             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Educating others                  | “…make sure [to] fix those stereotypes at their Thanksgiving table, at their Christmas gatherings. When someone makes a joke or makes an inappropriate comment, I think people need to make sure and correct that, say like ‘I have a friend, I have a coworker who is Muslim and I know that’s not true.’ Or ‘I know someone, I went to school with someone who is Muslim, and I don’t think that’s right, what you’re saying.’” |
|  • Helping provide understanding or humanize Muslims |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|  • Counteracting negative stereotypes about Muslims |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|  • Trying to bring different people together so they can get to know each other |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Advocating for Muslims peers      | “...also just to be an advocate for me in front of other colleagues, who may not be as familiar with my religious values or my dietary restrictions, kind of letting them know”  
“...he went out of his way to make it a point and to tell [others] that no, this is a good colleague, and he’s hardworking and stuff, and he should be considered for [this position]” |
<p>|  • E.g., in meetings or when they might/should be up for promotion |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Representative Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support Behaviors</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being accepting, supportive, and inclusive</td>
<td>“...I sent a photo of myself, and I told [my boss], this is what I wear. I just wanted to ask you, if this is alright with you...I will be wearing this, and if you’d like me to [adjust], I’d be happy to do that, and she said, oh no, you’re completely fine just as you are, just wear comfortable shoes because we might be walking a lot. And so she was very accepting of [my religious dress]”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accepting Muslim practices and not making a big deal out of them</td>
<td>“And so they will cater a lunch where everyone can enjoy, whether it’s like a Mediterranean lunch or something along those sorts. But instead of ordering from a restaurant that doesn’t have kosher meat, they’ll order from one that does, and it’s equally as good...also making sure that I don’t feel bad, if it seems like I am being a burden or just sometimes it can be more difficult to plan around me in that sense, so they always remind me that it’s not a big deal”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Celebrating diversity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Making sure that Muslims don’t feel like accommodations are an additional burden</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being intentional about making events more inclusive (e.g., providing non-alcoholic and vegetarian options, saying “holiday party” instead of “Christmas party”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Actively supporting religious practices (e.g., prayers, fasting)</td>
<td>“[During Ramadan, my coworkers would say] hey it’s time for you to eat, just stop what you’re, and it’s crazy busy, I never ate, you know, but they would be like, I’m going to take your [tasks], go eat.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“If I need to request time off for Eid or for any religious thing, I always have multiple people who are willing to volunteer to help me”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“So most Muslims that do pray will do their afternoon prayer during their lunch break, for example. But I’ve been in situations where...my managers, my coworkers, were very supportive of me having to take like a five- or ten-minute break even though it wasn’t lunch time, to go pray. And you know, that wasn’t a big deal and it was something they were very supportive of...they don’t see that as a hindrance or anything.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactively educating selves and becoming more aware</td>
<td>“I definitely wish [people] would go do a little bit more of their research. Sometimes they think I’m the expert on everything. And I’m not.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Understanding that not all Muslims are the same | “I do wish that managers would understand that you know, there’s all different types of people from all different backgrounds, and you know, there’s two
people that can seem very similar and still be of the same faith but practice very differently. I just wish that managers would be a little bit more open to having that dialogue with their subordinates and the people around them. And that senior managers and upper management would kind of promote that diversity and that inclusiveness so that it can be like a company-wide thing and not just based on person to person.”

Asking and listening (instead of making assumptions)
- Asking what would help
- Being interested in learning
- Being willing to get out of comfort zone and get to know people who are “different” from you
- Acknowledging the challenges and biases Muslims might be facing in the workplace

“It would be great if people are just like, ‘Hey! You’re Muslim. Cool, welcome to the team’. Anyway, what’s your favorite color?’ like, I don’t know, just acknowledge, or like, ‘Do you hug, do you shake hands? I’m not sure, I want to be able to accept you. What do you like?’ Like I know some people have different boundaries about this thing and, ‘What can, how can I respect that?’ and then that’s it.”

Treating Muslims normally
- E.g., when evaluating work and during everyday interactions

“We don’t want to be treated differently. We just want the same respect that everyone wants, you know, the same type of benefits that they offer to their employees. Obviously if you don’t want anything discriminatory happening…but as individuals, we don’t really need any special treatment, we don’t want to be treated differently either.”

Providing support after negative incident or interaction

“After that whole incident, there were people who were like I’m so sorry this happened to you, she shouldn’t have done that, and being very supportive like that.”

“Our TV [at work] is basically on all the time, so any time an attack happens…my officemates will always like console, if it’s a Muslim person, but like it’s a White person, like a White male, they’re like, here we go, another White guy, it’s always the crazy White dude…like where they acknowledge that it’s not always just a brown Muslim person doing these things, it’s a lot of times someone that looks them, as well.”
Table 5

**Leader Ally Behaviors**

*Setting the tone of the organization – inclusive, diversity-oriented, antidiscriminatory*

**Policies**
- Having zero-tolerance for discrimination
- Implementing clearer guidelines on how to report and address discrimination
- Using blind processes for job applications
  - E.g., hiring managers are blinded to applicants’ names when looking at resumes
- Having a diversity committee or person
  - E.g., someone employees can bring their concerns to, a group that thinks about how to make the workplace fairer and more inclusive
- Using a more flexible schedule
  - E.g., flexible hours to allow Muslims to take prayer breaks or shift hours during Ramadan, flexible days to allow Muslims to take Eid off
- Using a more flexible dress code
  - E.g., allowing employees to wear headscarves or keep a beard

**Practices**
- Proactively asking what employees might need for accommodations (as opposed to waiting for them to bring up)
- Celebrating diverse holidays (e.g., Eid)
- Hiring and promoting more minorities
  - Using diverse hiring committees
  - Ensuring diverse representation in recruitment and promotional materials
- Holding diversity trainings
  - Including religion as a topic
  - Having diverse representation in who is creating and giving the trainings
  - Personalizing the training to the individuals (not overly broad or generalizing)
  - Talking about subtle manifestations of discrimination (otherwise employees might not know how to identify these instances of discrimination)
  - Highlighting people’s blindspots
- Holding less formal diversity-related information sessions
  - E.g., short presentations put together by Muslim employees, lunches/coffee breaks, information tables in the lobby, “get to know a Muslim” day
- Letting minority employees know about local organizations and resources

**Personal support**
- Providing supportive responses after negative incidents
- Demonstrating values through personal actions
- Being aware of own potential biases and blindspots
**Providing instrumental support for religious practices**

- Providing prayer space (e.g., a nondenominational meditation room)
- Allowing for more flexible schedules (e.g., for prayer breaks) and work breaks in general
- Allowing Muslims to shift hours earlier or later during Ramadan
- Giving time off for Eid and other religious holidays

**Giving minority employees a voice**

- Providing a space to talk about diversity-related topics
- Providing a space to voice concerns
- Making sure that minorities feel comfortable in interactions with coworkers and clients (especially in less diverse areas)
### Table 6

**Coping and Identity Management Strategies with Representative Quotes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Representative Quote</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coping</strong></td>
<td><strong>Letting it go and moving on</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I believe in forgiving and just moving on. [If I go] to the store to buy groceries, and the cashier was in a bitter mood, it’s not because I’m wearing a headscarf or I’m a Muslim, it could be that that lady is just having a hard time… just give her the benefit of the doubt. I just move on, instead of making an issue of it because she treated me like this… if keeps doing that for months, yes then I might go and talk to someone. But a couple times? If I go and confront the manager, that poor person might lose their job. What good did I do? So that’s how I see it.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Getting used to it or desensitized</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“You just kind of brush them off. I don’t know. You hear all sorts of jokes and comments and you just, it’s in one ear, out one ear. I try to not take notice of anything, so that’s why I don’t even remember any of that.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Focusing on the positive</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“And so that to me, I [have had] such amazing experiences with people from completely different backgrounds… that these few instances, they’re going to happen, especially with the current environment, but I don’t put too much focus on them, just because people will intrinsically, they won’t like what I represent, and that’s just human nature, I guess. Have to come to terms with it to exist.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Representative Quote</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Coping (cont.)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Trying to reason why someone might believe or act the way they do; trying to be understanding</td>
<td>“Because maybe they’ve been inundated with so many like, negative images and false images and just very sensational headlines that are completely not reflective of what the reality is… I find myself trying to be very, you know, understanding and empathetic to that because that’s their experience, their reality. Maybe they’ve never interacted with a Muslim apart from what they see. So can you really, can you really blame that person for being you know, maybe hesitant or unsure.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to reframe and maybe not label something as discrimination</td>
<td>“I think I comforted myself by telling myself that I’d rather have him direct these [intrusive] questions at me, and for us to have a discussion and for me to be able to present my thoughts because everyone was watching also.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding that coworkers don’t actually believe the stereotypes; understanding that potentially offensive jokes are not serious</td>
<td>“We all make those kinds of jokes… so we always have these politically incorrect joking back and forth, and I do it to them, they do it to me, and we’re just fine with it. It’s the relationship, and it’s fun, they actually know better… they understand that things have ambiguities, so they don’t actually think that stuff.”</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The manifestation of religious identity at work</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being open and frank about religious identity</td>
<td>“Even when I take time off for religious holidays, I always let my team know, hey I am taking this time off because it is a religious holiday for me, instead of, hey I’m just taking a personal day, because I think it is a good way of making other people aware of the religion, right?”</td>
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<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Representative Quote</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Identity management (cont.)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Not volunteering information about religious identity unless it comes up or someone asks</td>
<td>“If anyone asks or is interested, I’m happy to share, but I will be honest with you, I don’t volunteer [information about my Muslim identity] all the time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Concealing religious identity</td>
<td>“At first, I probably won’t disclose to them that I’m Muslim. Even at the workplace, it takes me a little bit to tell people that I’m Muslim. So yeah, I definitely have my guard up and I’ll kind of see how people are, the things that they say, before I disclose to them.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Passing as non-Muslim</td>
<td>“I’m not going to lie, I use the privilege of passing as non-Muslim a lot, you know, I’m not like going to go I’m Muslim, hey what’s up, you know?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Acknowledging prominent feature of identity (e.g., headscarf)</td>
<td>“It’s that moment when you get in or you’re ready for the interview, and you just have to tell them, like okay I wear this”</td>
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<td>• Using abbreviated names</td>
<td>“[My husband] doesn’t wish to be recognized as a Muslim. He…uses an abbreviated name”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adjusting religious practices at work (e.g., daily prayers, Eid, shaking hands with members of the opposite sex)</td>
<td>“That’s the one I have always struggled with, just kind of getting away for the daily prayers at work...and if I can’t, I just continue to work.”</td>
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<td>“It gets tricky [to try to explain], and at times I just bite the bullet and it’s not worth the hassle, so I just shake the person’s hand”</td>
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<td>“I started to take [the kufi] off was just because of the amount of negativity that I experienced at my other job with it on. Just being identified publicly as Muslim, it was stressful”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Representative Quote</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Identity management (cont.)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Providing individuating information</td>
<td>“So it could be me telling someone...I’m born here, American-born citizen... It might consist of me telling them – oh, and I’m volunteering that information, actually. It’s not like they ask me, but volunteering it—might consist of me telling them that I went to school in the local suburb that we’re residing in, that I wear cowboy boots...”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Working harder to fit in (e.g., trying to bring up more “American” interests and hobbies)</td>
<td>“When I go to a new [client’s] house, I’m like okay, let me talk about the military or sports...”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Working harder to make others more comfortable (e.g., acting friendlier, smiling more, talking more)</td>
<td>“I always make sure to wear bright clothing and smile the crap out of my face. And I’ll put forth an effort to put my hand out to let people know, hey I’m open to you shaking my hand, you can talk to me normally, you can give me eye contact, I’m completely okay with that.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Counteracting negative portrayals and stereotypes of Muslims</td>
<td>“Well, I never let [discriminatory events] bother me because I just don’t think it’s worth it. Sometimes I try to be friendly anyways, to show them that Muslims are friendly people, and it’s just you know, sometimes you react in a negative way, it just confirms their belief.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Taking advantage of opportunities to educate others (e.g., when they ask questions)</td>
<td>“It gave me the opportunity to kind of talk to them about what the religion of Islam is because many of them that know don’t really know what all we do”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Deciding when is appropriate to speak up and advocate for self, others, and/or community</td>
<td>“I walk a fine line between speaking up, standing up, pushing the envelope, but also, I don’t want to jeopardize my own career...you know, people say that there’s no retaliation, but there [is]. There’s a stigma, you’re a problem person or whatever.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Representative Quote</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Identity management (cont.)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Broader practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Working harder as a minority to prove self at work</td>
<td>“I don’t know if that’s femaleness in the workplace, or if it’s Muslim-ness, or Muslim and female? I don’t know, but I know that in order to get what I want done, in order to feel like I have the agency that I see other people having, I feel like I have to expand, which means I have to deliberately speak up, I have to deliberately do all of this.”</td>
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</table>
| • Making an effort to connect with others (e.g., bringing food to the office, inviting people over for social gatherings) | “Be open, be friendly, build a relationship, don’t just assume you will be an outsider, you won’t be accepted. You just need to try harder than other people, and I did that. I like to bake, so most of the time, I’ll take goodies to [work] and give them to my coworkers.”  
“For Eid this year, I gave cards, simple cards, and everyone was like oh my gosh, I love my card.” |
| • Engaging in the broader community (e.g., community service, interfaith activities) | “My friends I have formed [this group], and we go around and do service projects, and so we go out into the community and help, you know like we go to food banks, we go to schools, where we are out there, and we don’t need to say [we are Muslim]. We're serving, and that is saying this is who we are. We care about people. Service is what our religion teaches us” |
| • Avoiding situations or environments to prevent potentially awkward or uncomfortable encounters | “I think one of the reasons why I have so far avoided a lot of discriminatory experiences, it's because I make sure I put myself in certain areas where I know that there's a lot of diversity, and generally there's high levels of tolerance.” |

Table 7

Summary of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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</table>
| **1. How do Muslim Americans experience their religion at work?**                 | • Many participants have had positive experiences and have not really experienced discrimination in the workplace  
  ○ They have generally felt included and comfortable, and have not had issues getting religious accommodations  
  ○ However, others have experienced discrimination in the workplace with experiences that range from subtle to overt discrimination  
  ○ These experiences can lead Muslim Americans to feel less comfortable talking about and expressing their religious identity at work  
  ○ Factors that can influence whether Muslim Americans will experience positive or negative interactions at work include environmental and interpersonal factors (e.g., more diversity in the organization; norms and policies that value inclusion and condemn discrimination)  
  ○ In general, Muslim Americans feel like they need to work harder as minorities in the workplace to prove themselves and counter the negative perceptions others may hold about Muslims  
  ○ Muslim Americans will choose different identity management strategies based on the situation and how others seem to be responding to their Muslim identity; constantly engaging in identity management strategies can have important consequences for these individuals |
| **2. How does gender influence the workplace experiences of Muslim Americans, and consequently, their experience of religion at work?** | • Some female participants talked about how the biases they faced in the workplace were probably more due to their gender than their religious identity  
  • However, they also acknowledged how the intersection of their religious identity and gender may also influence how people perceive and interact with them  
  ○ E.g., different stereotypes because they are Muslim women, men not always knowing how to interact with Muslim women  
  • Both Muslim men and women also discussed differences in religious appearance; many Muslim women wear a headscarf, which is often a giveaway for their religious identity |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. How does gender influence the workplace experiences of Muslim Americans, and</td>
<td>o Although Muslim men may keep a beard, wear the kufi, or have a name that signals their Muslim identity, it is often easiest for people to identify a Muslim if she is a woman wearing a headscarf</td>
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<tr>
<td>consequently, their experience of religion at work? (cont.)</td>
<td>o As a result, women who wear the headscarf or other religious coverings often cannot escape their religious identity and questions from others about being Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do out-group members, as coworker and leader allies, influence the social</td>
<td>• Participants discussed mostly positive experiences with the people that they work with (e.g., providing support for religious practices, helping set an organizational culture that condemns discrimination and celebrates diversity)</td>
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<td>identities and experiences of Muslims at work?</td>
<td>o These types of positive interactions helped participants feel a greater sense of belonging and more comfortable expressing their religious identity at work</td>
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<td>• However, negative interactions can also have a significant impact and make Muslims feel like an out-group at work</td>
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<td>o These interactions can be subtle and unintentionally biased, such as others asking ignorant questions about Muslims’ practices or always holding social and networking events that are centered around alcohol</td>
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<td>• For more detailed suggestions that coworkers and leader allies can help, as provided by the participants, refer to Tables 4 and 5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 1.** Conceptual model for invisible identity management from Clair and colleagues (2005)
Figure 2. Conceptual model for minority stress processes in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations from Meyer (2003)
**Figure 3. Conceptual model for Muslim American identity stress processes in the workplace**

- **Characteristics of Muslim identity**
  - Intersectionality with gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.
  - Prominence (e.g., religious appearance, public adherence to religious practices)
  - Personality

- **Environmental context**
  - Stereotypes and prejudice
  - Exposure to and education surrounding Islam
  - Organizational diversity
  - Organizational culture and policies
  - Sociopolitical climate

- **Interpersonal context**
  - Positive: coworkers and organizational leaders as allies
  - Negative: unsupportive coworkers and leaders

- **Positive workplace interactions**
  - Acceptance and belonging
  - Normal treatment
  - Support of religious practices

- **Negative workplace interactions**
  - Formal discrimination
  - Overt discrimination
  - Subtle discrimination

- **Internal psychological factors**
  - Personal beliefs
  - Previous experiences

- **Situation appraisal**
  - Perceptions of self and identity
  - Perceptions of others

- **Identity management behaviors**
  - Identity management strategies
  - Engaging vs. disengaging

- **Individual and social coping**
  - Individual coping strategies
  - Social support (from internal community and allies)
Appendix A

Interview Questions

Workplace Experiences
- As a Muslim American woman/man, what are the biggest challenges that you face in the workplace? (Research Question 1)
- Have you experienced any types of overt or subtle discrimination in the workplace? (RQ1)
- Do you utilize strategies to try to prevent prejudice or discrimination? (RQ1)
- How do you decide whether or not to talk about your religion at work? (RQ1)
- How do you think the workplace experiences of Muslim men and women differ? (RQ2)

Experiences with Coworkers and Organizational Leaders
- How have non-Muslim coworkers acted as allies to you in the workplace? (RQ3)
- How have organizational leaders acting as allies to you in the workplace? (RQ3)
- How have your coworkers and organizational leaders created a supportive (or unsupportive) work environment? (RQ3)
- How do you feel like they could improve? (RQ3)
- What kinds of policies are in place at your organization that support you as a Muslim employee? (RQ3)

Note. Although there was only one interview question directly tapping Research Question 2 (How does gender influence the workplace experiences of Muslim Americans, and consequently, their experience of religion at work?), many of the other questions under “Workplace Experiences” also highlighted the impact of gender in the participants’ experiences.
Appendix B

Line-by-line codes

- Accommodation type: fasting schedule adjustment
- Accommodation type: prayer space
- Accommodation type: prayer time
- Accommodation type: religious holiday
- Accommodations: easier to ask for when you have some power in the organization
- Accommodations: feel like can't ask
- Accommodations: feel like even if asked, would be rejected
- Accommodations: feel like shouldn't get special treatment
- Accommodations: feel like they can put you at a disadvantage
- Accommodations: make sure still get work done
- Accommodations: not really an issue asking for accommodations
- Accommodations: prep before asking
- Accommodations: provided
- Accommodations: received pushback for request
- Accommodations: seeing precedent of how organizations handled other accommodation requests
- Allies: acknowledge identity, make it okay, and move on
- Allies: acknowledge stereotypes / bias / struggles
- Allies: advocating
- Allies: always offer vegetarian options or food options Muslims can eat
- Allies: ask what would help
- Allies: be interested in learning about the religion
- Allies: be understanding and open
- Allies: be willing to talk and get to know people who are different from you
- Allies: being willing to talk about uncomfortable topics
- Allies: celebrate diversity
- Allies: challenges of being an ally
- Allies: confronting
- Allies: educate self / be aware
- Allies: educating others
- Allies: focus on similarities
- Allies: general support (less about religion)
- Allies: go out of way to demonstrate support
- Allies: having each other's backs
- Allies: help participant learn about majority culture
- Allies: help with people Muslims don't have "access" to
- Allies: helping normalize
- Allies: Ineffective: could have done more
- Allies: Ineffective: didn't actually confront
- Allies: Ineffective: lack of effort
- Allies: Ineffective: not genuine/conditional allyship
- Allies: Ineffective: sometimes don't need to say anything
- Allies: Ineffective: well-intentioned but actually making things uncomfortable
- Allies: Ineffective: well-intentioned but misplaced
- Allies: Ineffective: when people just stand by and let it happen
- Allies: invite people over and get to know each other
- Allies: making sure to be inclusive
- Allies: not making assumptions
- Allies: participant uncomfortable asking for support
- Allies: providing information to counteract negative portrayals of Muslims
- Allies: redirecting conversations / taking over the interaction
- Allies: showing up
- Allies: supportive after incident
- Allies: supportive of religious practices
- Allies: supportive with discrimination/discriminatory comments
- Allies: supportive with work or ideas
- Allies: treat like a normal person
- Allies: voting demonstrates values
- Allyship: appreciated
- Allyship: feel like can stand on own without allies
- Allyship: general but not specific examples
- Allyship: giving guidelines to allies on how they can help
- Allyship: haven't really experienced
- Allyship: importance
- Allyship: provides belonging / pulls someone into the ingroup
- Allyship: sometimes harder in the workplace
- Behavior: advertise Muslim information events
- Behavior: answering questions
- Behavior: being a good person
- Behavior: being inclusive
- Behavior: being involved in interfaith activities
- Behavior: being vigilant / careful
- Behavior: civic engagement
- Behavior: Confrontation
- Behavior: Confrontation: depends on situation
- Behavior: Confrontation: generate some type of understanding
- Behavior: Confrontation: problem persists
- Behavior: Confrontation: receive apology
• Behavior: Confrontation: wanting to confront but don't
• Behavior: Coping
• Behavior: Coping: focus on positive
• Behavior: Coping: just let it go and move on
• Behavior: Coping: making fun of stereotypes
• Behavior: Coping: try to reason through why / be understanding
• Behavior: Coping: try to reframe
• Behavior: Coping: understand that coworkers don't actually believe the stereotypes
• Behavior: Coping: understand that jokes are not serious
• Behavior: Educating others
• Behavior: Educating others: part of identity
• Behavior: fail to recognize something as discrimination
• Behavior: fighting for rights and equality
• Behavior: given up
• Behavior: good at job
• Behavior: got along with people at work
• Behavior: Have changed people's opinions of Muslims
• Behavior: Identity management: acknowledging dress
• Behavior: Identity management: addressing Muslim apathy/bubble
• Behavior: Identity management: adjust religious practices at work
• Behavior: Identity management: avoid situations or events because of Muslim identity
• Behavior: Identity management: backfiring
• Behavior: Identity management: be more friendly
• Behavior: Identity management: conceal
• Behavior: Identity management: counteract negative portrayals
• Behavior: Identity management: don't want to highlight differences
• Behavior: Identity management: dressing colorfully / in light colors
• Behavior: Identity management: having a versatile identity
• Behavior: Identity management: highlight similarity to others
• Behavior: Identity management: How one dresses and behaves depends on the situation
• Behavior: Identity management: humanizing Muslims
• Behavior: Identity management: more private about personal life
• Behavior: Identity management: open and frank about it
• Behavior: Identity management: overcompensate or work harder to fit in
• Behavior: Identity management: overcompensate to make others more comfortable
• Behavior: Identity management: passing
• Behavior: Identity management: people didn't know about Muslim identity
• Behavior: Identity management: personality helps
• Behavior: Identity management: providing individuating information
• Behavior: Identity management: sometimes conceal sometimes tell
• Behavior: Identity management: tell people if they ask or if it comes up
• Behavior: Identity management: testing the waters
• Behavior: Identity management: try to avoid awkward encounters
• Behavior: Identity management: use abbreviated name
• Behavior: Identity management: when answering questions, don't focus as much on the religious aspect
• Behavior: Identity management: won't volunteer information about identity
• Behavior: Identity management: work harder to prove self
• Behavior: kind gesture to coworkers
• Behavior: make an effort to connect with others
• Behavior: normalizing religion
• Behavior: partnering up with allies at work
• Behavior: prove self through actions
• Behavior: pushing to provide information sessions in schools or community
• Behavior: quit job b/c of lack of support
• Behavior: Speaking up: becomes tiring after a while
• Behavior: Speaking up: becoming vocal / confronting
• Behavior: Speaking up: choosing to speak up
• Behavior: Speaking up: conflicted / fine line between speaking up and jeopardizing career, others' perception of them, or relationships with others
• Behavior: Speaking up: don't speak up
• Behavior: Speaking up: experiencing retaliation after speaking up
• Behavior: Speaking up: fear of retaliation
• Behavior: Speaking up: feel comfortable issuing a complaint
• Behavior: Speaking up: for others
• Behavior: Speaking up: for self
• Behavior: Speaking up: how to know when to speak up
• Behavior: Speaking up: knowing what fights to pick
• Behavior: Speaking up: letting ignorance pass
• Behavior: Speaking up: letting offensive jokes pass
• Behavior: Speaking up: makes it a bigger deal
• Behavior: Speaking up: people wonder why Muslims don't speak out
• Behavior: Speaking up: reported supervisor
• Behavior: Speaking up: won't press charges
• Behavior: Speaking up: won't press charges b/c discriminatory people will probably leave soon
• Behavior: Speaking up: won't press charges b/c like the other people in the organization
• Behavior: Speaking up: would press charges if knew would make a difference for someone else
• Behavior: started an employee resource group
• Behavior: stay at job even though bad experiences
• Behavior: stay on high road
• Behavior: talk to supervisor about accommodation
• Behavior: talk to supervisor about religion-related issue
• Behavior: talking to leadership about diversity-related issues
• Behavior: try to live as normal citizens
• Children: bullying in schools
• Children: interfaith activities
• Children: proud of identity
• Children: want to conceal identity
• Community: being a representative: understand how behaviors reflects on other Muslims
• Community: being a role model
• Community: being a spokesperson
• Community: being a spokesperson: challenging
• Community: being a spokesperson: common
• Community: being a spokesperson: hard to keep up with everything that people might ask
• Community: being a spokesperson: others looking to see how they will react
• Community: being a spokesperson: pressure
• Community: being a spokesperson: try to put less pressure on self
• Community: being a spokesperson: value
• Community: don't really talk about work experiences / discrimination with other Muslims
• Community: intrafaith bias, discrimination within own group
• Community: more general discussion about biases that exist than personal experiences of discrimination
• Discrimination: abuse of power
• Discrimination: b/c of dress
• Discrimination: came out of faith-based discussions
• Discrimination: don't know how to handle
• Discrimination: don't know what rights are
• Discrimination: exists
• Discrimination: formal: denied accommodations or benefits
• Discrimination: formal: fired for Muslim identity or practices
• Discrimination: formal: not selected for a job or interview, hiring disadvantage
• Discrimination: formal: not selected for a promotion
• Discrimination: formal: refuse to serve because of Muslim identity
• Discrimination: gotten better
• Discrimination: happens so often - get used to or don't keep track
• Discrimination: hard to prove discrimination in general
• Discrimination: hard to prove subtle discrimination
• Discrimination: Lack of: didn't really face discrimination at work
• Discrimination: Lack of: treated equally
• Discrimination: less overt now
• Discrimination: long-term effects
• Discrimination: mixed experiences
• Discrimination: not sure if it will happen but it could
• Discrimination: on social media
• Discrimination: overt: anti-Islam rant from coworker
• Discrimination: overt: called a terrorist
• Discrimination: overt: discriminatory comments
• Discrimination: overt: offensive jokes
• Discrimination: overt/formal
• Discrimination: people are quick to associate identities
• Discrimination: people aren't as open and accepting as they think
• Discrimination: racial
• Discrimination: respond by redirecting conversation
• Discrimination: sensitive to possible discrimination
• Discrimination: sexual harassment
• Discrimination: subtle
• Discrimination: subtle: avoid eye contact
• Discrimination: subtle: backlash for job opportunity/promotion
• Discrimination: subtle: being talked over
• Discrimination: subtle: comments or questions
• Discrimination: subtle: how people interact differently with non-Muslims
• Discrimination: subtle: ignorant comments or asking ignorant questions
• Discrimination: subtle: looks
• Discrimination: subtle: negative tone
• Discrimination: subtle: not intentional but still excluding
• Discrimination: subtle: othering
• Discrimination: subtle: people assume participant's religion is Christianity
• Discrimination: subtle: people being surprised that participant isn't "foreign"
• Discrimination: subtle: people believing things would be better or easier if participant was not Muslim
• Discrimination: subtle: people feeling like accommodations are a burden
• Discrimination: subtle: people making assumptions
• Discrimination: subtle: people not understanding how Muslims can be "American" or "normal"
• Discrimination: subtle: people not understanding how Muslims can get along with X group
• Discrimination: subtle: people not understanding spectrum of Muslims
• Discrimination: subtle: people reluctant to interact or avoid interacting
• Discrimination: subtle: people seem confused or unable to remember participant is Muslim or their practices
• Discrimination: subtle: people wanting to "fix" participant
• Discrimination: subtle: people wanting to "protect" participant
• Discrimination: subtle: people wanting to "save" participant
• Discrimination: subtle: pushback about Muslim information sessions
• Discrimination: subtle: social events
• Discrimination: takes effort to deal with it
• Discrimination: treated as a pariah
• Discrimination: violence
• Diversity of Islam and Muslims: different ways of practicing
• Diversity of Islam and Muslims: individuality as Muslims
• Diversity of Islam and Muslims: other Muslims' experiences may be worse
• Diversity of Islam and Muslims: racialization of Islam
• Event: 9/11
  • Event: 9/11: community and support
  • Event: 9/11: emotional
  • Event: 9/11: experiences got worse
  • Event: 9/11: others' responses
  • Event: attacks: anxious
  • Event: attacks: ashamed of identity b/c of how it's portrayed
  • Event: attacks: hope perpetrator is not a Muslim
  • Event: Dealing with election results
  • Event: Muslim ban
• Experience: assimilation in the US
• Experience: balance between being open to questions and opening self up to inappropriate questions
• Experience: Being a minority
• Experience: Being a minority: people can't tell you apart
• Experience: being an American
• Experience: being an immigrant
• Experience: being the only Muslim someone knows
• Experience: can't differentiate between the effect of policies vs someone's personal prejudices or lack thereof
• Experience: contrast of experiences
• Experience: Cross-cultural
• Experience: depends on work setting
• Experience: diverse doesn't mean educated or not ignorant
• Experience: diversity doesn't fix everything
• Experience: double discrimination because of husband's religious identity
• Experience: educated doesn't mean unbiased
• Experience: educated means nonreligious
• Experience: entitlement
• Experience: everyone supporting each other
• Experience: experience at airport
• Experience: experiences aren't due to religion
• Experience: focus on self
• Experience: friends with coworkers
• Experience: getting different treatment in and out of work
• Experience: having differences with others but still supporting each other
• Experience: holding out for a different job
• Experience: how one is raised impacts how they live their life
• Experience: Identity: became more religious over the years
• Experience: Identity: don't want people to know about Muslim identity
• Experience: Identity: faith as an important part of identity
• Experience: Identity: faith as something that is separate from work
• Experience: Identity: feel like can be more open now
• Experience: Identity: feel uncomfortable telling people about identity or discussing religion
• Experience: Identity: figuring out own way to be Muslim
• Experience: Identity: hesitate/not sure how others will respond
• Experience: Identity: known in the workplace
• Experience: Identity: mixed reactions from coworkers about identity
• Experience: Identity: not ashamed
• Experience: Identity: Not looking "Muslim"
• Experience: Identity: not quite sure what to say
• Experience: Identity: okay with people knowing as they get to know participant
• Experience: Identity: okay with people knowing to help educate
• Experience: Identity: proud
• Experience: Identity: struggle to balance work and faith
• Experience: Identity: what being Muslim means to them
• Experience: injury at work
• Experience: Interaction: surface-level positive
• Experience: making a career decision with spouse
• Experience: minorities supporting each other
• Experience: minorities supporting each other: with how to deal with discrimination
• Experience: more of a personal challenge than experience from others
• Experience: not sure what part of identity caused experience
• Experience: religion played a role in experiences (although not primary focus)
• Experience: rubbed the wrong way
• Experience: seen as "trouble"
• Experience: situation is almost comical
• Experience: Time: Becoming comfortable w/ being different
• Experience: Time: Experiences and perceptions changing over time
• Experience: Time: Hijabs more accepted
• Experience: Time: how things have changed after the election
• Experience: Time: people are becoming more open about their prejudice and biases
• Experience: transfer offices
• Experience: understanding and awareness comes from getting to know each other
• Experience: when personal practices are different from parents / family
• Feeling: negative
• Feeling: negative: annoyed, frustrated, or angered by people's ignorance or intolerance
• Feeling: negative: awkward
• Feeling: negative: chronic feeling of unease
• Feeling: negative: conflicted about how to manage Muslim identity
• Feeling: negative: didn't have a choice
• Feeling: negative: difficult, intense, or stressful experience
• Feeling: negative: disrespected
• Feeling: negative: exhausted
• Feeling: negative: feel like an outgroup or not welcome, lack of belonging
• Feeling: negative: feel like behaviors are a "performance"
• Feeling: negative: feel like contribution not valued
• Feeling: negative: feel like identity is being reduced to religious identity
• Feeling: negative: hurt
• Feeling: negative: lonely as a minority
• Feeling: negative: need to leave hostile environment
• Feeling: negative: nervous / anxious
• Feeling: negative: nothing is good enough
• Feeling: negative: overwhelming emotions because of lack of support
• Feeling: negative: uncomfortable
• Feeling: negative: unfair
• Feeling: negative: unsafe because of Muslim identity
• Feeling: negative: wish people would establish relationships before asking personal questions
• Feeling: negative: worried b/c of Muslim identity
• Feeling: neutral: disbelief / surprise
• Feeling: neutral: feel like need to explain self and faith
• Feeling: neutral: feel like need to prove American identity
• Feeling: neutral: feel responsibility to answer questions
• Feeling: neutral: feel responsibility to represent others
• Feeling: neutral: if other people are uncomfortable, it's their problem
• Feeling: neutral: not responsible for educating
• Feeling: neutral: want to be treated normally
• Feeling: neutral: wants to be able to make own decisions
• Feeling: neutral: women being more understanding of issues that women have to deal with
• Feeling: neutral: would rather people ask questions
• Feeling: positive: belonging / not ostracized
• Feeling: positive: comfortable
• Feeling: positive: doesn't feel responsible for knowing everything
• Feeling: positive: don't blame others for their lack of knowledge or experience (perspective-taking)
• Feeling: positive: empowered
• Feeling: positive: excited to leave job
• Feeling: positive: feel like making a difference as a minority
• Feeling: positive: liberating
• Feeling: positive: not afraid
• Feeling: positive: not stressful or tiring to talk to others about faith
• Feeling: positive: okay with people asking questions
• Feeling: positive: safe
• Feeling: positive: understand where questions are coming from
• Gender differences
• Gender differences: cultural expectations
• Gender differences: dress
• Gender differences: men receive more aggressive name-calling
• Gender differences: others talk to men more freely
• Gender differences: religion less visible
• Gender: bias in leadership pipeline
• Gender: bias in the workplace
• Gender: stereotypes
• Leadership: asked participant to write diversity message for organization
• Leadership: being a good leader is hard
• Leadership: diversity-oriented
• Leadership: don't say no but also don't approve
• Leadership: protection
• Leadership: selective attention / manipulation of performance reviews
• Leadership: sets tone of organization
• Leadership: share personal examples of values
• Leadership: supportive
• Leadership: unsupportive
• Leadership: unsupportive: try to sweep issue under the rug
• Misc: accents
• Misc: age / maturity
• Misc: how do you define religious?
• Misc: intersectionality
• Misc: LGBTQ issues
• Misc: more discrimination in the workplace in Europe
• Misc: people like those who are similar to them
• Misc: personal biases
• Misc: personal interpretation of experience
• Misc: politics
• Misc: preaching to the choir
• Misc: selection bias
• Misc: sociopolitical climate
• Misc: stigma surrounding mental health
• Muslim practices: alcohol makes it hard to socialize
• Muslim practices: Beard: changes how people interact with you: more apprehension
• Muslim practices: Beard: changes how people interact with you: more respect
• Muslim practices: Beard: keeping a beard
• Muslim practices: Beard: no pressure to shave
• Muslim practices: Beard: potential hiring disadvantage
• Muslim practices: Beard: pressure to shave
• Muslim practices: Cultural component of being Muslim
• Muslim practices: don't keep Ramadan but celebrate Eid
• Muslim practices: Dress: changed dress to fit in or reduce negative interactions
• Muslim practices: Dress: not traditional
• Muslim practices: food restrictions
• Muslim practices: practice privately
• Muslim practices: prayer: daily prayer
• Muslim practices: prayer: Friday prayer
• Muslim practices: prayers
• Muslim practices: prayers: pray in car, stairwell, etc.
• Muslim practices: prayers: space
• Muslim practices: prayers: time
• Muslim practices: prayers: time: skip breaks to fit in prayer
• Muslim practices: pressure to adjust religious practices
• Muslim practices: Ramadan fasting
• Muslim practices: religious holiday
• Muslim practices: shaking hands with women
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: act of resistance
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: adapting dress to make it more modern/fashionable
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: didn't remove
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: doesn't wear headscarf
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: don't have to worry about what to wear
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: feel prouder of religion
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: less constraints on identity
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: may create different experiences (compared to if not wearing one)
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: misconceptions
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: more respectful treatment
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: not a big deal
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: not wearing it allows people to feel more comfortable about asking questions
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: only wanted to take off in response to a specific event
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: others say it's less approachable
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: part of identity
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: people questioning decision
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: potential hiring disadvantage
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: so people don't focus on looks
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: so people identify individual as person, not woman
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: someone else forcefully removed / pulled off
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: taking headscarf off
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: understands why some women might remove headscarf
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf: want people to ask questions
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf/kufi: differential treatment
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf/kufi: external pressure to remove
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf/kufi: makes religion more apparent/visible
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf/kufi: more respectful treatment
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf/kufi: no external pressure to remove
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf/kufi: no personal pressure to remove
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf/kufi: personal belief that it might be easier if remove
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf/kufi: personal choice
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf/kufi: reactions from others
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf/kufi: removing would be changing identity/values
• Muslim practices: Wearing the headscarf/kufi: taking it off is only temporary
• Muslim stereotypes
• Muslim stereotypes: absurdity
• Muslim stereotypes: educated and productive minority group
• Muslim stereotypes: Media portrayals
• Muslim stereotypes: women
• Organization: accepting people as they are
• Organization: address discrimination
• Organization: antidiscriminatory policies
• Organization: be proactive not reactive
• Organization: blind processes
• Organization: celebrating diverse holidays
• Organization: clearer guidelines/protocol in addressing discrimination
• Organization: designated diversity person
• Organization: diverse hiring committees
• Organization: diversity committee
• Organization: diversity committee: practicality
• Organization: diversity committee: role
• Organization: diversity in recruitment / promotional materials
• Organization: Diversity trainings: don't really work
• Organization: Diversity trainings: don't typically include faith
• Organization: Diversity trainings: should be more personal
• Organization: Diversity trainings: should have diverse representation in who is creating the talks
• Organization: Diversity trainings: should have diverse representation in who is giving talks
• Organization: Diversity trainings: should talk about more subtle manifestations
• Organization: Diversity trainings: talking about more subtle things is helpful because helps identify these instances later
• Organization: Diversity trainings: need to be more direct
• Organization: diversity-related information sessions/trainings
• Organization: flexible days (weekends, holidays)
• Organization: flexible dress code
• Organization: flexible hours
• Organization: giving a space to talk about diversity-related topics
• Organization: giving a space to voice concerns
• Organization: highlighting diversity blindspots
• Organization: hiring minorities
• Organization: Importance of: cultural sensitivity
• Organization: Importance of: education
• Organization: Importance of: representation
• Organization: Importance of: the right culture
• Organization: let employees know about local organizations
• Organization: make sure minorities feel comfortable in interactions w/ coworkers and clients
• Organization: more about organizations stepping up than about the individuals
• Organization: processing session
• Organization: promoting minorities
• Organization: provide prayer space/room
• Organization: providing small bits of information/contact to others
• Organization: providing support/response
• Organization: public display of support
• Organization: reach out to local Muslims
• Organization: supportive of faith
• Organization: work breaks
• Others: accepting
• Others: actions speak louder than words
• Others: afraid to talk to participant
- Others: anti-Muslim feelings or biases
- Others: asking questions on Muslim-related topics
- Others: Being "politically correct"
- Others: Being "politically correct": participant won’t be offended if something is slightly wrong
- Others: Being "politically correct": people careful of what they say because don't want to offend
- Others: Being "politically correct": people careful of what they say because of legal ramifications
- Others: Being "politically incorrect"
- Others: Changing perceptions takes time
- Others: conflict b/c of beliefs
- Others: conflict b/c of promotion
- Others: coworkers are very knowledgeable and aware
- Others: didn't allow personal biases to influence work decisions
- Others: difference in perspectives of majority members and minorities
- Others: don't ask questions even though they have them
- Others: don't know how to appropriately interact with Muslim women
- Others: fear of unknown
- Others: getting people to listen is hard
- Others: identity-blind
- Others: inappropriate personal information
- Others: inappropriate questions
- Others: inappropriately prying/putting someone on the spot
- Others: intention behind questions
- Others: intimidated
- Others: know where the line is
- Others: lack of awareness
- Others: lack of empathy or understanding
- Others: lack of exposure
- Others: lack of knowledge
- Others: might have differing opinions but still civil
- Others: needing to be explained to
- Others: not appropriately generalizing or drawing the right conclusions
- Others: not as accepting
- Others: not sure what others are thinking
- Others: passive-aggressive comments
- Others: people ask more questions because Islam was a "choice"
- Others: people mostly interested or curious
- Others: people who won't change their minds
- Others: policies can only do so much; it's also about the individual
- Others: social support
- Others: surprised by firing
• Others: true feelings come out from fear / anger / resentment
• Others: try fasting
• Others: try prayer
• Others: try to convert participant to Christianity
• Others: trying to impress their beliefs
• Others: trying to relate their experiences of discrimination
• Others: uncertainty from others b/c new interaction
• Others: uncertainty from others b/c of dress
• Others: uncertainty/discomfort/rudeness from others
• Others: wanting to learn
• Work environment: am own boss or in leadership position
• Work environment: busy time at work
• Work environment: diverse city
• Work environment: diverse clients
• Work environment: diverse/diversity-oriented
• Work environment: employer is Muslim
• Work environment: growing diversity everywhere
• Work environment: having more than one Muslim in the organization
• Work environment: hostile
• Work environment: improving, less incivility
• Work environment: Industry: accounting
• Work environment: Industry: advertising
• Work environment: Industry: consulting
• Work environment: Industry: contract work
• Work environment: Industry: corporate
• Work environment: Industry: customer service
• Work environment: Industry: engineering
• Work environment: Industry: family business
• Work environment: Industry: healthcare
• Work environment: Industry: law
• Work environment: Industry: nonprofit
• Work environment: Industry: oil and gas
• Work environment: Industry: research
• Work environment: Industry: school/university/education
• Work environment: Industry: tech
• Work environment: less educated
• Work environment: majority Muslim
• Work environment: more educated
• Work environment: non-diverse
• Work environment: non-diverse clients
• Work environment: office politics
• Work environment: open-minded
• Work environment: Religion: don't really talk about religion but do talk about related topics
• Work environment: Religion: don't talk about religion much at work
• Work environment: Religion: talk about religion
• Work environment: Religion: want to talk about it but feel like can't
• Work environment: Religion: want to talk about religion but not sure how
• Work environment: Size: large
• Work environment: Size: mid-sized
• Work environment: Size: small
• Work environment: worked together for long time
• Work: authenticity at work
• Work: culture of always working
• Work: having mentors that are Muslim or have a similar background
• Work: holiday events
• Work: informal ways of moving ahead in an organization
• Work: lack of support or mentorship
• Work: merit-based view
• Work: Muslims could actually help during "American" holidays
• Work: networking events
• Work: others who are viewed as more "leadership" material
• Work: race stereotypes, issues, or bias at work
• Work: social events
• Work: stereotypes in business