Social Problems, 2023, **70**, 735–754
doi: 10.1093/socpro/spac040
Advance Access Publication Date: 30 June 2022
Article

OXFORD

Religion, Race, and Perceptions of Police Harassment

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ABSTRACT

Research examining how race and ethnic locations shape perceptions of the police is well-established. Yet there is little research examining how religion shapes individuals' experiences with police. This study examines the influence of race and religion on U.S. adults' reported experiences with police harassment due to their religion. We find that, independent of race and ethnicity, Muslim adults are significantly more likely to report police harassment due to their religion. Race and ethnicity moderate this effect, with Muslim adults identifying as Black or as Middle Eastern-Arab-North African (MENA) significantly more likely than White Muslim adults to report religion-based police harassment. We find that, *independent of religion*, adults identifying as Black or as MENA are significantly more likely to report *religion*-based police harassment when compared to White individuals, a finding that is explained by these individuals' greater reports of *race*-based police harassment. That is, exposure to police harassment based on race is more likely to make an individual *perceive* harassment based on their religion as well. These findings highlight the intersectional nature of individuals' social locations more broadly and the importance of addressing these multiple locations if we are to address the social problem of police harassment and victimization.

KEYWORDS: policing; religion; race; religious discrimination; racism.

Publicized instances of police brutality in the case of Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, Muhammad Muhaymin, George Floyd, and others have sparked widespread protests across the United States and around the world (Bryant 2020; Buford et al. 2020; Wamsley 2020) and created a sense of urgency about the relationship between police and the communities they surveil. Researchers have examined disproportionate policing in Black communities and the negative perceptions and interactions with police (Brunson and Miller 2006; Desmond, Papachristos, and Kirk 2020; Kramer, Remster, and Charles 2017; Lyle and Esmail 2016). This scholarship has focused on the impact of race on police arrests and incarceration, police militarization in racial minority communities, the effectiveness of race-matching among police to reduce crime, and low-income urban communities' perceptions of police (Brunson and Miller 2006; Donohue and Levitt 2001; Gamal 2016; Weitzer 2000; Weitzer and

This research was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (Award #1754015 and #1753972, Christopher P. Scheitle and Elaine Howard Ecklund, Principal Investigators). Please direct correspondence to the first author at the Department of Sociology, Rice University, 6200 Main Street, Houston, TX 77251, USA; email: jf56@rice.edu

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Tuch 2005). Still, little is known about how the combination of race and religion could have an impact on experiences with police.

As the United States becomes more racially and religiously diverse, it is increasingly important for scholars to understand how religion and race intersect in the collective experience that minorities have with the state and with the police. For example, the post-9/11 geopolitical environment has created a tense relationship with law enforcement for Muslim American communities. Many Muslim Americans fear state-sanctioned police surveillance through actions such as online tracking, airport security, routine stops, or monitoring within religious spaces (Alimahomed-Wilson 2017; Beydoun 2019; Montalbano 2019; Selod and Embrick 2013). Police may, therefore, be perceived as perpetrators of religious harassment and discrimination.

However, incidents of religion-based vandalism or hate crimes can also increase necessary interactions between religious communities and police. Victims of religion-motivated hate crimes, such as the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh (Shortell 2019) and the murder of a Sikh man in Denver (Tabachnik 2020), have relied on law enforcement not only to apprehend suspects, but also to collect evidence that perpetrators committed violence based on aspects of the victims' religious identity (FBI 2020). In a recent study of anti-Semitic hate crimes, Mills (2020) found that increases in hate crimes against Jews were also associated with increases in the population of racial minorities moving into majority White[1] neighborhoods, concluding that Jewish communities may bear the brunt of hate crimes due to the influx of other racial minorities. Research like this illustrates the way religious and ethno-racial identities are often linked, and the impact that identity-based crime may have on religious communities. Religion-motivated hate crimes may compel religious communities to establish relationships with police in several ways, from securing religious gatherings to recording instances of vandalism and religious harassment.

These examples demonstrate a paradox. Police can be perceived and act as both agitators against and agents of justice. The connection between experiences with police and religious and racial identity could potentially point to other social factors that can contribute to positive or negative views of police. Race and ethnicity, class, gender, and immigration status are all social locations that intersect to create diverging experiences with police (Byng 1998; Crenshaw 1990; Yazdiha 2020). Yazdiha (2020) finds that recent lower-class Muslim immigrants avoid collective mobilization against policing in Muslim American communities because of experiences with police aggression and retaliation in their home countries. Native-born children of Muslim immigrants, however, employ grassroots strategies to mobilize against police injustice. While both groups view policing of Muslim communities as unjust, recent immigrant status and class background can contribute to immigrants avoiding mobilization against policing, while native-born status and higher education contribute to the collective activism of second-generation Muslim Americans. Similarly, wealthy and highly educated immigrant Muslim professionals and their native-born children who live away from other ethnic minorities may perceive increased policing in their neighborhoods as an opportunity for greater assimilation into U.S. society, choosing to work with police to demonstrate their cooperation with U.S. policies, and to separate themselves from negative perceptions of Muslims (Yazdiha 2020).

The scant previous research available on religion-based policing points to the significance of including an intersectional approach to understanding religion-based police harassment. Here, we look at the way race and religion shape perceptions of police harassment due to religion. While much of the literature on religion and policing is qualitative and provides a thick description of particular cases, we use a national survey to understand broadly how race and religion influence religion-based police harassment. We find that, when controlling for race and ethnicity, Muslims are more likely to report police harassment on the basis of religion. When race and ethnicity are examined as

1 We understand that there is debate about whether to capitalize "White." We choose to capitalize the word here to combat the assumption of Whiteness as an invisible unraced social standard. We instead view Whiteness as a racial category that critically impacts the way that race functions in society.

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moderating factors, we find that Muslims who are Black or Middle Eastern-Arab-North African (MENA) are more likely to report religion-based police harassment when compared with White Muslims. Our findings also show that Americans identifying as Black or MENA are more likely to report religion-based police harassment, *regardless of religion*. An intersectional approach aids our understanding of why these groups significantly differ in their reports of religion-based police harassment (Collins 1986; Collins and Bilge 2016; Crenshaw 1990; Yazdiha 2020). We argue that these findings may demonstrate the extent to which police harassment based on racial and ethnic bias contributes to individuals' broad assessments of police biases based on other intersecting marginalized identities, such as religion.

RACE AND POLICING

Low-income communities and racial minorities are frequently faced with aggressive police force, surveillance, and police misconduct, with African Americans disproportionally targeted (Bass 2001; Brunson and Miller 2006; Donohue and Levitt 2001). It is not uncommon for people living within these communities to report personal experiences with police, or to know someone who has had negative encounters with police (Bass 2001; Brunson and Miller 2006; Donohue and Levitt 2001; McGlynn-Wright et al. 2020). Past negative interactions with police fuel negative expectations of potential interactions with police (Brunson and Miller 2006; Donohue and Levitt 2001; McGlynn-Wright et al. 2020). This is true for race and class, as well as gender (Brunson and Miller 2006; Weitzer and Tuch 2004). While African American men are more likely to experience police violence and regular searches, African American women regularly report being stopped by police when traveling alone and are more worried about the threat of sexual harassment by police (Brunson and Miller 2006). Although African American women are just as likely to know of others who had negative experiences with police, Brunson and Miller (2006) find that African American men are more likely to report that they have personally experienced police aggression. The prevalence of these negative experiences among young African American men suggests that they would be more likely to have negative perceptions of any future interactions with police because of being targets of disproportionate policing.

Disproportionate policing and publicized incidents of police violence within Black communities has prompted some scholars to consider the impact race may have on crime reporting and number of arrests (Desmond, Papachristos, and Kirk 2016; Donohue and Levitt 2001). Donohue and Levitt (2001) examine the degree to which the race of police officers matters in reducing crime and building better perceptions among racial minority communities. In cities where there are a high proportion of police who are also racial minorities, there are significantly more arrests of White people but no significant change in the arrests of non-White citizens. Cities with a majority White police force have a significantly high number of arrests of racial minorities when compared with arrests of White citizens (Donohue and Levitt 2001). These findings suggest that race matching of police within non-White communities does not necessarily change the number of interactions racial minorities may have with police. Racial minorities may still experience relatively high rates of policing because of practices that specifically target their communities. This active policing of racial minority communities can have a detrimental impact not only on individuals who are targets of arrests or police violence, but also people living within those neighborhoods. The prevalence of police violence can potentially reduce crime reporting within racial minority communities (Desmond et al. 2016; for an exception, see Zoorob 2020). For Black communities, police violence against Black individuals reduces trust in police and decreases crime reporting for all crime types. While trust of the police may already be low within Black communities, publicized incidents of police violence may increase distrust even further and negatively affect actions (Anderson 2000; Desmond et al. 2016).

These examples all point to the reality that there are substantial differences in the way Black and other non-White communities are policed when compared to White communities (Weitzer and

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Tuch 2005). While some groups may experience little to no policing, for others, police harassment based on racial identity is not uncommon. This gap contributes to the way police are perceived within U.S. society and the meanings individuals associate with police. In many low-income communities where the effects of policing are present, individuals may associate undesired police interaction with some aspect of their identity or presence (Stuart 2016). As a result, people may begin to manipulate aspects of the way they present themselves, such as removing religious clothing or symbols from their person to prevent and reduce interaction with police (Stuart 2016). When examining policing, sociologists should think about multiple intersecting identities and how they may contribute to perceptions of policing. While scholars have demonstrated that there is a link between race and police harassment, there remains a gap in our understanding of how individuals interpret religion-based police harassment due to both their religious *and* racial identities.

RELIGION AND POLICING

The relationship between U.S. religious communities and the police is complicated by the nature of interactions between police and religious communities. These interactions can be facilitated by religious communities themselves or can be a result of police initiation (Bradford, Jackson, and Stanko 2009; Scheitle 2018; Stuart 2016). Religion-based hate crimes, vandalism, theft, and harassment are all reasons religious communities sometimes rely on local police. Reliance on the police for the safety of their religious organizations may be a particular concern for some religious minority communities, or smaller, more isolated religious congregations. These communities may perceive themselves as being potential targets of violence and crime because of an identifying aspect of their identity such as language, race, tradition, or ethnicity (Byng 1998). In addition, the prevalence of other identity-based crimes may make some religious communities more willing to initiate interactions with police as a means of security (Scheitle 2018).

Police may also facilitate interactions with religious communities. According to Montalbano (2019), surveillance of religious communities is often prompted by a lack of legitimate information about the beliefs and practices of the community, fear of communities that are on the margins, and anxieties within the broader sociopolitical climate. She outlines the ways that surveillance of Mormon, Quaker, and Muslim communities has occurred. In the case of Mormons and Quakers, surveillance was used to monitor specific actions that occurred, or were perceived to be occurring, within each community. Actions such as polygamy, interests in self-sovereignty, and humanitarian aid for countries that were ideologically opposed to the United States after the Cold War, were all perceived by the U.S. government as legitimate reasons for allowing law enforcement to surveil both communities. For Muslim communities in New York, however, surveillance was permitted by the New York Police Department as a means of prevention (Montalbano 2019). Legal ordinances such as The Patriot Act had created a legal justification for surveilling Muslim communities (Beydoun 2019; Montalbano 2019; Selod and Embrick 2013). Additionally, technological advances in surveillance measures included a variety of ways to watch and implicate Muslim communities, whether in person or online (Montalbano 2019). These actions demonstrate how police interacted with Muslims in New York, but also set the standard for how some Muslims came to understand and view the police.

Messages within religious communities can also motivate relationships with and perceptions of police. White Evangelicals, for example, are less likely to view policing as a means of discrimination against racial or religious minorities (Perry and Whitehead 2019; Perry, Whitehead, and Davis 2019). While some scholars believe that White Evangelicals' disregard for the way policing negatively affects minorities is a result of perceived status threat (Jones 2016), other scholars find that Christian Nationalism can also be adopted by Evangelical non-Black racial minorities (Perry et al. 2019). Perry and Whitehead (2019), however, find that even Black Christians who perceive Christianity to be an integral part of American identity are more likely to believe that structural inequality shapes policing. This finding is particularly interesting because there is some evidence to suggest that religion can also

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serve as a protection against policing (Beyerlein, Soule, and Martin 2015). In a study of policing at protests, Beyerlein, Soule, and Martin (2015) found that there was less police presence when protests were organized or facilitated by mainline or Black Protestant groups. In the same study, however, Beyerlein and colleagues (2015) find that protests organized by fundamentalist Christians and non-Christian religious groups draw greater police presence than protests organized by secular groups. Although factors such as less aggressive protest strategies could influence decreased policing of religious protests, these findings also imply that some religious identities might have a protective effect against police violence for certain groups (Beyerlein et al. 2015).

Racialized Religion

Some scholars also argue that religion can be used as a form of racialization and not just religious harassment (Cainkar and Selod 2018; Love 2017; Selod 2019; Selod and Embrick 2013). Selod (2019) argues that for Muslims in the United States, physical and non-physical markers have played an increasing role in the way Muslims are targeted by police and others. Names, language, skin tone, beards, and other "physical" markers have all been used as ways of marking individuals as Muslim, even if they do not identify as such. Indeed, many of the post-9/11 crimes against Sikhs have been the result of the perpetrator mistakenly identifying Sikhs as Muslims (Joshi 2006). Additionally, religion-based police harassment is sometimes gendered. Muslim women—especially those who cover their hair—are often more visible to the public view. Because of this, routine checks of Muslim women's physical bodies happen more frequently than for Muslim men (Selod 2019). However, other physical and non-physical markers still serve to racialize Arab and South-Asian men as Muslim and therefore a terrorist threat (Cainkar 2009; Cainkar and Selod 2018; Joshi 2006; Selod 2019). These examples not only point to the way that religion can be categorized, but also to the complicated relationship between race, religion, and gender in facilitating negative interactions with law enforcement. This literature diverges from other research that focuses on policing of Muslim communities as primarily a form of religious discrimination, and instead theoretically positions such policing as a form of racism.

It is important to also consider the role that intersectionality may play in racialized religions, such as Islam. Scholars center the discussion of the racialization of Islam predominantly on the experiences of Arab, South Asian, and other immigrant Muslim communities (Cainkar 2006; Cainkar and Selod 2018; Considine 2017; Love 2017; Selod 2019; Selod and Embrick 2013; Yazdiha 2020). Scholars generally overlook the potential impact of racialized religion on groups that have been distinctly racialized in the United States, such as Black Americans. Byng (1998), however, examines how Black American Muslim women mediate discriminatory experiences through their multiple social locations, arguing that the pervasiveness of racial discrimination must also be analyzed within the context of what Collins (1991) describes as interlocking forms of oppression. Race, gender, and religion all overlap to filter the way that Black Muslim women experience and make sense of discrimination (Byng 1998). By extension, Black Muslims may experience religion-based policing differently from non-Black Muslim communities.

Although studies have outlined the role that religion plays in both perpetuating beliefs about police and in facilitating the nature of relationships with police, less attention is given to how religious individuals perceive reported incidents of police interaction and potential religion-based discrimination and hate crimes at the hands of the police. Examples of reported police harassment emphasize the way police may target individuals due to race or gender identity. Religion-based police harassment is not typically examined across a variety of traditions. While much research has been done to understand religiously-motivated incidents of police harassment against Muslim communities, more work can be done to evaluate how these reported experiences compare with individuals across other religious traditions and according to race.

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Hypotheses

Here, we examine reported incidents of *religion-based* police harassment among White, Black, MENA, or Other Race individuals who identify as Christian, Jewish, Muslim, with other religions, or with no religion. It is important to note that we separate the categories of White and MENA. Although in the United States MENA individuals have often been racially classified as White (Ajrouch and Jamal 2007; Cainkar 2006), we provided separate categories for respondents for more clarity regarding racialized experiences with police. Based on the literature reviewed above, we state several hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Independent of race and ethnicity, Muslim adults will be more likely to say they have experienced police harassment due to religion relative to Christian adults.

Existing research suggests that Muslims in the United States experience a disproportionate amount of policing, particularly due to their religious identity (Beydoun 2019; Dubosh, Poulakis, and Abdelghani 2015; Montalbano 2019). Muslim American communities have been historically policed and surveilled after 9/11 (Beydoun 2019; Cainkar 2009; Selod 2018). Because of this, it is very likely that Muslims will be more likely to say that they have experienced religion-based police harassment.

Hypothesis 2: Independent of religion, MENA adults will be more likely to say they have experienced police harassment due to religion relative to those identifying as White.

Because MENA individuals are potentially racialized as Muslim, existing literature supports the presumption that Arab or North African adults experience more religion-based police harassment than White adults irrespective of religion (Cainkar 2006; Cainkar and Selod 2018; Considine 2017; Love 2017). In short, Middle Eastern-Arab-North African adults are more likely to be perceived as Muslim, whether they identify as such.

Hypothesis 3: Independent of religion, individuals identifying as Black will be more likely to say they have experienced police harassment due to religion relative to those identifying as White.

Current literature has outlined the many ways policing is directly linked to racism, particularly against Black communities. There is scholarship that illustrates the disproportionate policing within Black communities, and its negative effects (Bass 2001; Brunson and Miller 2006; Desmond et al. 2016; Donohue and Levitt 2001). We think this will carry over into perceptions of police-harassment due to religion.

Hypothesis 4: Experiences with police harassment due to race and ethnicity will account for Black and MENA adults' greater perceived experiences with police harassment due to religion.

Although we focus on police harassment due to religion, we believe that the existing racial disparities within policing will contribute to the perceptions of police harassment based on respondents' other identities as well. This prediction also connects the literature on race-based policing and religion-based policing by demonstrating that racial and religious identities are not only linked but can also influence the meanings individuals give to negative experiences with police.

Hypothesis 5: Muslim adults identifying as Black or as MENA will be more likely than Muslim adults identifying as White to say they have experienced police harassment due to religion.

We predict that within religious communities, racial disparities will hold. Because White Muslims may not be immediately racialized as Muslim, they may not experience as much police harassment

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due to their religion. Similarly, because Black and MENA adults experience police harassment due to their racial and ethnic identities, these experiences have the potential to shape their perceptions of police harassment due to their identities as Muslim.

We examine these hypotheses in our findings below and discuss how the results may provide implications for how police harassment due to religion may be connected to the race and ethnicity of respondents.

DATA AND METHODS

The data for this study come from the survey component of the 2019 Experiences with Religious Discrimination Study (ERDS), a multi-method project examining individuals' experiences with interpersonal hostility, organizational discrimination, and victimization due to their religion. The ERDS was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

The survey component of the ERDS consisted of a nationally representative survey of U.S. adults featuring oversamples of key religious minority groups and an instrument dedicated to measuring a wide range of experiences and individuals' responses to those experiences. The survey was fielded using the Gallup Panel, a probability-based panel of adults recruited through address-based and random digit dialing based sampling. The panel contains approximately 80,000 individuals who complete surveys online and 20,000 individuals who do not have internet access and complete surveys through the mail. A stratified sample of 10,198 individuals was selected from the panel, which consisted of 5,131 randomly selected adults and oversamples of individuals who had identified as Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, or atheist on previous surveys.

Individuals invited to complete the survey were provided a $2 pre-paid incentive. At the conclusion of the survey fielding period, 4,744 responses were received, representing a completion rate of 46.8 percent using AAPOR RR5.[2] Overall response rates for panel surveys must also take into account all stages of selection into the sample, which occurs in several stages. Panel recruiting begins on the Gallup Daily tracking survey, which has an average AAPOR RR3 of 12 percent. An average of 77 percent of Gallup Daily tracking respondents agree to recontact, and the average response rate (RR3) for the panel recruitment is 28 percent. The overall final response rate for the survey, accounting for all stages of the survey is 1.2 percent (.12 * .77 * .28 * .468).

Gallup produced weights to account for the oversampling of some religious groups and for non-response bias. The weighting started with the panel base weight as the initial weight. Base weights took into account the probability of selection into the panel for all stages of selection. Next, post-stratification weights were created to adjust for non-response bias. Targets for post-stratification weighting were generated from the 2017 Current Population Survey and aggregate data from the Gallup Daily Tracking Survey. The weights project the data to the U.S. adult population. After excluding cases with missing data on the measures included in this study, the final analytical sample consists of 4,373 individuals.

Measures

Police harassment due to religion. The outcome of interest for this study comes from a series of items that was prefaced with the statement (emphasis included on instrument): "We now want to turn our attention to incidents of **harassment, threats, and violence** due to beliefs or identities that you hold. Since you reached age 16, how often do you suspect you have experienced the following kinds of incidents **because of your religion**?" The following instruction was directed towards those who did not identify with a religion: "Note: If you identify as an atheist, agnostic, or otherwise do not have a religion, please respond to these questions to tell us how often you have experienced these incidents because of these identities or because you do not have a religion."

2 Response rates by religious group varied within this overall rate. For instance, 54.2 percent of sampled Jewish individuals responded to the survey compared to 26.4 percent of sampled Muslim individuals.

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One of the items following this prompt was, "Been harassed by the police." Offered responses were (0) never, (1) once, or (2) twice or more. For the purposes of this study, we combine the latter two responses to represent "once or more," or any experience with perceived police harassment due to the individual's religion.

Religion. We measure individuals' religious identity through a question on the survey that asked, "Religiously, do you consider yourself to be Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, atheist, or something else? If more than one, select the one that best describes you." The survey offered twenty-four responses, including the option of selecting "something else" and specifying another religious identity.[3] Due to the small number of cases in some of these religious categories, particularly across some racial categories, and our primary focus on just a handful of religious identities, we recoded responses into five groups: (1) Christian, (2) Jewish, (3) Muslim, (4) Other religion, and (5) No religion.

Race or ethnicity. We assess individuals' race or ethnicity using a survey question asking, "What race or ethnicity do people perceive you to be? You may select more than one:" Eight responses were offered: (1) White, Caucasian, European (2) Black, African, Caribbean (3) Hispanic, Latino (4) Middle Eastern, Central Asian, Northern African, Arab (5) East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, etc.) (6) South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, etc.) (7) Native American, American Indian (8) Other, specify.

As with the religious categories, we combine some of these race or ethnicity groups due to the small number of cases and because of the focus of our research. Specifically, we recode individuals into the following categories: (1) White alone, (2) Black alone, (3) Middle Eastern-Arab-North African alone, (4) Other or multiple race or ethnicities.

Police harassment due to race or ethnicity. Hypothesis 4 argues that individuals identifying their race or ethnicity as Black and MENA will be more likely to say they have experienced religion-based police harassment because experiences with racial-based police harassment will have made them more open to the possibility of police harassment due to other aspects of their identity. We assess this using an item on the survey that was part of series of items that began with the preface (emphasis on instrument): "We are also interested in incidents of **harassment, threats, or violence** that you have experienced because of other identities that you hold. Since you reached the age of 16, how often do you suspect you have experienced the following kinds of incidents **because of your race or ethnicity**?"

One of the items following this prompt was, "Been harassed by the police." Offered responses were (0) never, (1) once, or (2) twice or more. As with the similar religion-based harassment item described above, we combine the latter two response to represent "once or more," or any experience with perceived police harassment due to the individual's race or ethnicity.

Controls. Individuals' religious identity and their racial or ethnic identity may overlap with other social locations which, in turn, may overlap with perceptions of police harassment. Given this, we include several control measures in our analyses. These include controls for national origin, language, and citizenship. National origin comes from a question on the survey which asks, "In what county were you born?" A list of nations was provided to respondents, and for the purposes of this study responses were coded at (0) Born in U.S. and (1) Not born in U.S. We control for individuals' language using a question asking, "Can you speak a language other than English?" Responses were either (0) No or (1) Yes. Citizenship is accounted for through a survey question asking, "Are you a United States citizen?" Responses were (1) Yes, (2) No, and (3) In the process of becoming a U.S. citizen.

3 The responses offered were: 1. Christian, Protestant; 2. Christian, Catholic; 3. Christian, Eastern Orthodox; 4. Christian, Latter-day Saints (Mormon); 5. Christian, Other tradition, specify: _____; 6. Christian, Nothing more specific; 7. Jewish, Orthodox; 8. Jewish, Conservative; 9. Jewish, Reform; 10. Jewish, Other tradition, specify: _____; 11. Jewish, Nothing more specific; 12. Muslim, Sunni; 13. Muslim, Shi'a; 14. Muslim, Other tradition, specify: _____; 15. Muslim, Nothing more specific; 16.Buddhist; 17. Hindu; 18. Sikh; 19. Baha'I; 20. Jain; 21. No religion; 22. Agnostic; 23. Atheist; 24. Something else, specify: ____.

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Finally, we control for individuals' gender, age, and education. Gender was measured using a survey question asking, "What is your gender?" Offered responses were (1) Man, (2) Woman, (3) Nonbinary, and (4) Other, please specify. For this study we combined the third and fourth response to represent "other gender." Age and education are both measured using data provided by Gallup, as all panelists complete initial demographic surveys that are periodically updated. Age is measured continuously and ranges from 18 to 96. Education is measured with the following categories: (1) less than a high school diploma, (2) high school graduate, (3) technical, trade, vocational, or business school or program after high school, (4) some college, university, or community college—but no degree, (5) two-year associate degree from a college, university, or community college, (6) four-year bachelor's degree from a college or university, (7) some postgraduate or professional schooling after graduating college, but no postgraduate degree, (8) postgraduate or professional degree, including master's, doctorate, medical, or law degree.

RESULTS

We begin by examining univariate statistics for all of the measures just described. These are shown in Table 1. All analyses presented in this study utilize the sample data weights and Stata's complex survey commands (*svy*).

Of most interest in Table 1 is the finding that 3.8 percent of U.S. adults report experiencing police harassment due to their religion. Table 1 also shows the distribution of religious identities and racial and ethnic identities among U.S. adults. The natural question to ask, and the focus of Hypotheses 1–3, is how the rate of perceived religion-based police harassment varies across these religious and racial identities. Our first look at this is shown in Figure 1.

Bivariate Analyses

Figure 1 presents the rate of perceived police harassment due to an individual's religion across religious racial categories. Beginning with the religious categories on the left-hand side of the figure, we see that Muslim adults have a much higher rate of reporting police harassment due to religion, with about 20 percent reporting such an experience. It is worth noting that the overall rate among U.S. adults was estimated at 3.8 percent, so Muslim individuals are about *five times* as likely to say they have been harassed by the police due to their religion. The prevalence of religion-based police harassment among individuals identifying as Christian (3.6 percent), Jewish (2.3 percent), with another religion (4.3 percent), or saying they have no religion (3.5 percent) is much closer to the overall rate among U.S. adults. This provides some initial support for Hypothesis 1.

The right side of Figure 1 presents the percentage of U.S. adults reporting an experience with police harassment due to religion by the individual's race. Here we see that individuals identifying as MENA are the most likely of the four groups considered to say they have experienced religion-based police harassment. Just over 35 percent of the individuals in this group say they have encountered such harassment, which is nearly 10 times the percentage seen among U.S. adults overall. This provides initial support to Hypothesis 2.

The percentage among the other racial categories is much smaller relative to the MENA group. This initial comparison, however, overlooks the fact that the percentage among Black individuals (9.4 percent) and individuals identifying with another race (6.0 percent) is still quite high relative to the 3.8 percent seen among all U.S. adults, while the percentage among individuals identifying as White (2.1 percent) is comparatively low. The percentage for Black adults provides some support to Hypothesis 3.

In sum, Figure 1 shows clear religious and racial patterns underlying individuals' perceptions of police harassment due to their religion. Regarding the former, Muslim adults are much more likely than Christian, Jewish, religiously unaffiliated, and adults identifying with another religion. Regarding the latter, adults identifying as MENA are dramatically more likely to say that they have experienced

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Weighted Percentage or Mean	*Linearized Standard Error*	*Min-Max*
Outcome			
Harassed by the Police Because of Religion			
Never	96.2%	—-	—-
Once or more	3.8%	—-	—-
Focal Predictors			
Religion			
Christian	61.5%	—-	—-
Jewish	2.1%	—-	—-
Muslim	1.0%	—-	—-
Other religion	10.9%	—-	—-
No religion	24.5%	—-	—-
Race and ethnicity			
White	69.2%	—-	—-
Black	11.7%	—-	—-
MENA	0.2%	—-	—-
Other or multiple race or ethnicity	18.9%	—-	—-
Harassed by Police due to Race or Ethnicity			
Never	89.2%	—-	—-
Once or more	10.8%	—-	—-
Controls			
Not born in U.S.	6.2%	—-	—-
Speaks language other than English	29.3%	—-	—-
Citizenship			
U.S. citizen	98.8%	—-	—-
In process of becoming citizen	0.6%	—-	—-
Not a citizen	0.6%	—-	—-
Gender			
Man	48.8%	—-	—-
Woman	49.4%	—-	—-
Other	1.8%	—-	—-
Age	45.29	.37	18-93
Education	4.24	.04	1-8

Data: 2019 Experiences with Religious Discrimination Survey; N=4,373; MENA=Middle Eastern, Arab, North African

police harassment due to their religion when compared to White adults. However, Black adults and those identifying with another race or ethnicity are also much more likely than White adults to say they have experienced such religion-based police harassment. To what extent do these patterns interact with each other? That is, how does the rate for Black Muslim adults compare to, say, White Muslim adults?

Table 2 shows the distribution of race and ethnicity within the religious identity groups being examined here. We see, for instance, that 68.2 percent of Christian adults identify as White alone, while 13.2 percent identify as Black, and 18.6 percent identify with another race or multiple races. None of the Christian adults in our sample identify their race or ethnicity as MENA. Looking at the

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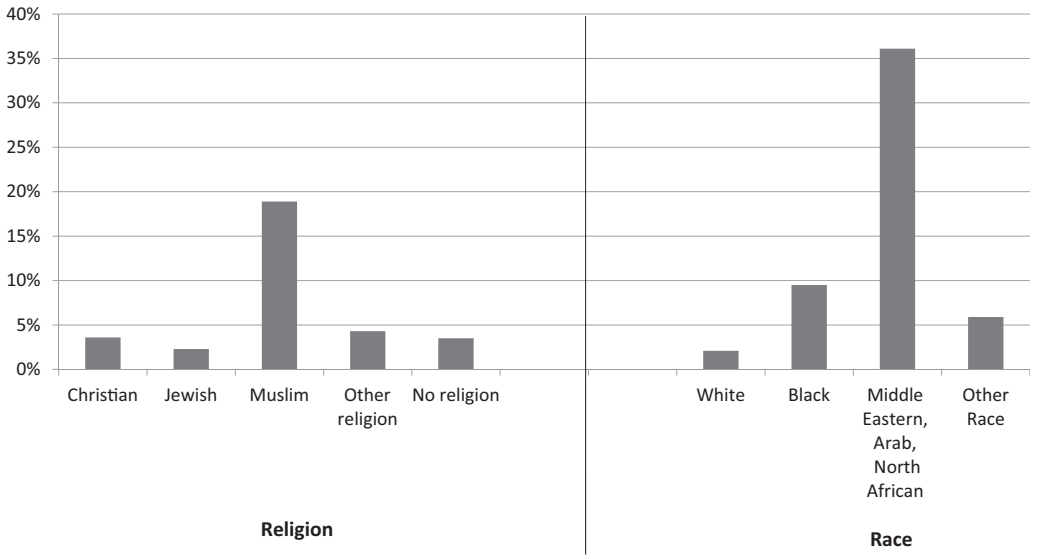


Figure 1. Percentage Reporting Experience with Police Harassment Because of Their Religion by Religion and Race Separately

percentages among Jewish adults, we find that 84.4 percent identify as White alone with 15.6 percent identifying with another race or multiple race and ethnicities. None of the Jewish adults in our sample identify as Black or MENA.

The racial distribution among Muslim adults is somewhat more diverse. Just over fifteen percent of Muslim adults identify as White alone, 26.7 percent identify as Black alone, 15.4 percent identify as MENA, and 41.2 percent identify with another race or multiple race and ethnicities. Adults identifying with another religion or who say they do not have a religion are relatively comparable to Christian adults. Looking at the other religion group first, 67.5 percent identify as White alone, 8.1 percent identify as Black alone, 24.4 percent identify with another or multiple races, and none of the individuals in this religious group in our sample identify as MENA. Turning to the no religion group, we find that 73.3 percent identify as White alone, 10.1 percent identify as Black alone, 0.1 percent identify as MENA, and 16.5 percent identify with another or multiple races or ethnicities.

Figure 2 examines perceptions of religion-based police harassment within each of these religion-race combinations. That is, it builds upon Figure 1 by examining patterns for the interaction between race and religion. Note that, as seen in Table 2, some of the religion-race combinations cannot be estimated because of a lack of cases within the groups. Figure 2 omits these racial categories in these situations.

Looking first at the pattern among Christian adults, we find that 2.1 percent of White Christian adults report experiencing police harassment due to their religion. This compares to 8.0 percent of Black Christian adults and 6.1 percent of Christian adults identifying with another or multiple races. That Black adults are more likely to report religion-based police harassment within the Christian category provides additional support to Hypothesis 3. This suggests that, even among Christians, there is a *racial* component to perceptions of *religion*-based police harassment, with individuals belonging to racial minorities perceiving more *religion*-based police harassment. Why is this? We argued above and in Hypothesis 4 that it is because these racial and ethnic groups are more likely to experience police harassment due to their race and ethnicity, which makes them more aware of or open to the possibility that they have also been harassed by the police due to other characteristics, such as their religion. We will assess this hypothesis later.

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Table 2. Distribution of Race by Religion

Race	*Christian*	*Jewish*	*Muslim*	*Other religion*	*No religion*
White	68.2%	84.4%	15.9%	67.5%	73.3%
Black	13.2%	0.0%	27.6%	8.1%	10.1%
MENA	0.0%	0.0%	15.4%	0.0%	0.1%
Other race	18.6%	15.6%	41.2%	24.4%	16.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	1,560	367	176	462	1,808

Data: 2019 Experiences with Religious Discrimination Survey; *N*=4,373; Estimates weighted to account for sample design and nonresponse. *Ns* are unweighted. MENA=Middle Eastern, Arab, North African

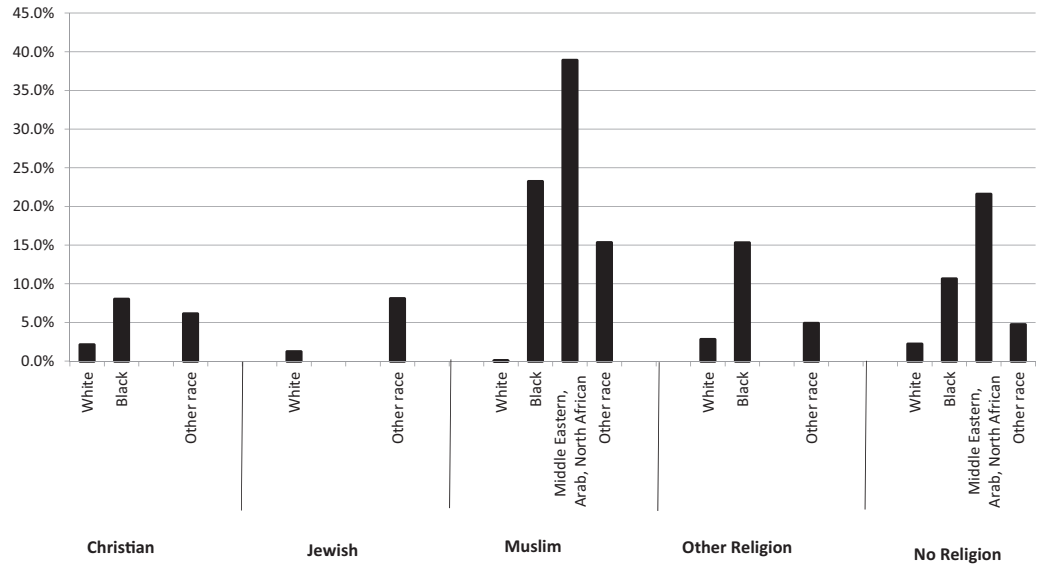


Figure 2. Percentage Reporting Any Experience with Police Harassment Because of Their Religion by Race and Religion Combined

The percentages in Figure 2 for Muslim adults are particularly striking. Almost no (0.1 percent) Muslim adults who identify as White alone report experiencing police harassment due to their religion. On the other hand, 23.2 percent of Black Muslim adults report such religion-based police harassment. This percentage increases to 38.9 percent among Muslim adults identifying their race or ethnicity as MENA. Finally, 20.8 percent of Muslim adults identifying with another or multiple races or ethnicities say they have experienced police harassment due to their religion. These patterns provide support to Hypothesis 5, which argues that that race and ethnicity will moderate the Muslim effect on perceived police harassment due to religion.

We find similar differences among those identifying with another religion or with no religion. For both of these groups, the rate of perceived religion-based police harassment is lowest among White adults (2.2 percent for the other religion group, 2.8 percent among the no religion group). This percentage increases two to four times among those identifying with the other three racial and ethnic categories. For instance, 10.6 percent of Black adults who do not identify with a religion say they have been harassed by the police due to their religion. Again, this provides additional support for

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Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3, which stated that Black and MENA adults would be more likely than White adults to report religion-based police harassment *independent of their religion*.

Multivariate Analyses

The results so far, of course, are somewhat descriptive and do not account for other social locations that may shape individuals' interactions with and perceptions of the police. To begin accounting for these other factors, we turn to Table 3. This table presents the results of logistic regression models predicting any reported experience with police harassment due to religion.[4] The results are presented as odds ratios, so ratios above one indicate an associated increase in the odds of an individual saying they have experienced religion-based police harassment and a ratio below one indicates an associated decrease in those odds.

Model 1 in this table presents the unconditional differences between religious groups that were first examined on the left-hand side of Figure 1. We see that, relative to Christian adults, the odds of a Muslim individual reporting religion-based police harassment are six times greater. The odds of the other religious groups reporting police harassment are not significantly different relative to the odds for Christian adults. Model 2 presents the unconditional differences between racial groups that were first examined on the right-hand side of Figure 1. Here we find that, relative to White adults, the odds of all the other racial groups reporting religion-based police harassment are significantly greater. The odds of Black adults reporting such harassment are about five times as great as White adults. The odds of MENA adults reporting religion-based police harassment are about twenty-six times as great. Finally, the odds of adults identifying with another or multiple races reporting such harassment are about three times as great as the odds for White adults.

As we saw in Table 2, there is some overlap between individuals' religious identities and their racial or ethnic identities. With this in mind, Model 3 in Table 3 assesses the independent effect of each on perceptions of religion-based police harassment while controlling for the other. For instance, we find that, net of the effect of racial or ethnic identities, the odds of Muslim adults reporting police harassment due to their religion is still almost three times as great as the odds of Christian adults reporting such harassment. This reinforces the support for Hypothesis 1. This odds ratio is smaller than what was seen in Model 1 though, which suggests that some of the difference between Christian and Muslim reports of religion-based police harassment is tied to racial and ethnic differences between the groups. However, not all of that difference is explained by those racial differences. In short, if we took two individuals of the same race or ethnic identity, we would still expect the Muslim individual to be more likely to report religion-based police harassment.

We also see in Model 3 that the racial and ethnic differences seen previously in Model 2 remain significant after controlling for individuals' religious identities. Specifically, relative to adults identifying as White, those identifying as Black, MENA, or with another racial or ethnic identity have significantly greater odds of reporting religion-based police harassment. In other words, if we took two otherwise similar individuals who are both Christian, for example, we would expect one identifying as Black (or MENA, or with another race) to be more likely to report religion-based police harassment than one who identified as White. This provides additional support to Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3. These ratios are smaller than those seen in Model 2, particularly for the MENA category, suggesting that some of the racial or ethnic differences in police harassment were tied into religious differences between the groups.

4 Given that only 3.8 percent of the cases report police-based harassment due to their religion, one might consider a model such as rare events logistic regression or penalized logistic regression. However, as Allison (2012) notes, the issue is not so much the proportion of events but the actual number of events, and with the number of cases with the event in our analysis small sample bias is not likely to be a major factor. Moreover, some of those alternative estimation methods do not allow for other features used in this analysis, such as the use of complex survey data.

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Table 3. Logistic Regression Models Predicting Any Experiences with Police Harassment Because of Religion (Odds Ratios)

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*
Religion					
Christian (ref.)	—	—	—	—	—
Jewish	.61	—	.87	1.52	1.92
Muslim	6.16**	—	2.83*	5.13**	5.10**
Other religion	1.20	—	1.26	.95	1.24
No religion	.97	—	1.04	1.17	1.06
Race and ethnicity					
White (ref.)	—	—	—	—	—
Black	—	4.76**	4.65**	.51	.75
MENA	—	25.84**	10.88**	2.21	1.88
Other race or ethnicity	—	2.83**	2.73**	.69	.78
Harassed by Police due to Race or Ethnicity	—	—	—	35.88**	29.21**
Controls					
Not born in U.S.	—	—	—	—	1.91
Speaks language other than English	—	—	—	—	1.33
Citizenship					
U.S. citizen (ref.)	—	—	—	—	—
In process of becoming citizen	—	—	—	—	1.48
Not a citizen	—	—	—	—	.18
Gender					
Man (ref.)	—	—	—	—	—
Woman	—	—	—	—	.85
Other	—	—	—	—	2.43
Age	—	—	—	—	1.01
Education	—	—	—	—	.89
Constant	.04	.02	.02	.01	.01
N	4,373	4,373	4,373	4,373	4.373

Data: Experiences with Religious Discrimination Survey, 2019;
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$;
Estimates weighted to account for sample design and nonresponse; MENA=Middle Eastern, Arab, North African

Why would racial and ethnic groups such as Black and MENA adults be more likely to report police harassment *due to religion* even after accounting for individuals' religion? We argue in Hypothesis 4 that this is because these groups' experiences with police harassment due to their race and ethnicity make them open to the possibility that they could have also been harassed due to religion. That is, once an individual sees biased police harassment as possible or even likely, this perception shapes how they see the police interacting with their other characteristics, such as religion. We test this hypothesis in Model 4, which introduces a separate predictor asking individuals if they have ever experienced police harassment *due to their race or ethnicity*.

As expected, we find that individuals who say they have experienced race-based police harassment have significantly greater odds of saying they have experienced religion-based police harassment. Specifically, the odds of such an individual reporting police harassment due to religion are over 35 times greater as compared to the odds for an individual who says they have not experienced police harassment due to race.

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Once we account for experiences with race-based police harassment, we find in Model 4 that all of the previously significant differences between White adults and the racial minority groups in experiences with religion-based police harassment have become non-significant. In other words, the reason why adults identifying as Black, MENA, or with another race say they have experienced police harassment due to religion regardless of their religion is because they are more likely to have experienced police harassment due to their race. This provides support to Hypothesis 4. We also see in Model 4 that, even after accounting for perceived experiences with police harassment due to race and ethnicity, Muslim adults still have significantly greater odds of saying they have experienced religion-based police harassment. In fact, the odds have increased in this model as compared to Model 3 to over five times those of Christian adults.

Finally, Model 5 introduces the control measures for individuals' nation of origin, language, citizenship, and their demographic characteristics. Of most interest is that the patterns seen in the previous model all remain. Examining the control measures themselves, we actually find not significant differences or effects for any of the measures.[5]

At this point the analysis has provided strong support for Hypotheses 1 through 4. Muslim adults are significantly more likely than Christian adults to report police harassment due to religion independent of race and ethnicity, experiences with race-based police harassment, and the control measures. Individuals identifying as Black, MENA, and with other race and ethnicities are more likely to report religion-based police harassment, and this seems to be explained away by their experiences with race-based police harassment.

We have not assessed Hypothesis 5, however, which argues that race and ethnicity will moderate the experiences of Muslim adults with police harassment. To examine this issue, we turn to Table 4, which presents a logistic regression model similar to Model 5 in Table 3 except that it includes interaction terms between the religion and race categories. We do not show the effects for the control measures in this table, as they are not of particular interest. Because of the inclusion of the interaction terms, the odds ratios for the religious categories represent the differences among White adults, while the odds ratios for the racial categories represent the differences among Christian adults.

Looking first at the odds ratios for the religion categories, we see that White Muslim adults actually have *significantly lower odds* of reporting religion-based police harassment when compared to White Christian adults. This is obviously counter to the overall Christian-Muslim differences seen in previous analyses, although it was suggested by the pattern seen in Figure 2. If we look at the interaction terms for the other Muslim categories, however, we find that the odds increase greatly among Muslims identifying with the other racial categories. Table 5 presents within-religion racial contrasts in the predicted probability of reporting police harassment based on this model relative to White adults. We can see that, relative to White Muslim adults, all of the other racial categories among Muslim adults have significantly greater probabilities of reporting police harassment due to religion. This provides support to Hypothesis 5.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overall, our findings support our hypotheses. When compared to Christian adults, Muslim adults are significantly more likely to report experiences of religion-based police harassment; and Black and MENA Muslims are more likely than White Muslim adults to report religion-based police harassment. These findings support existing literature on policing of Muslim American communities. While existing literature overwhelmingly focuses on police surveillance of Muslim communities and

5 Although the interaction between religion and gender in predicting religion-based police harassment is not a focus of this study, we did examine whether gender moderates the effects of religion. In particular, do Muslim women face more police harassment than Muslim men, potentially because of greater visibility due to wearing a hijab or other covering? The analysis found that the odds of Muslim women reporting police-based harassment was in the direction of being greater than the odds for Muslim men, but this difference was not quite statistically significant (p=.15).

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Table 4. Logistic Regression Model Predicting Any Experience with Police Harassment Because of Religion Focused on Interaction Effects between Religion and Race (Odds Ratios)

	Logistic Regression Model (odds ratios)
Religion (among white adults)	
Christian (ref.)	—
Jewish	1.17
Muslim	.02**
Other religion	2.26
No religion	1.56
Race and ethnicity (among Christian adults)	
White (ref.)	—
Black	.89
MENA	6.97
Other race or ethnicity	1.03
Religion X Race	
Jewish X Black	a
Jewish X MENA	a
Jewish X Other race	6.56
Muslim X Black	434.12**
Muslim X MENA	73.60
Muslim X Other race	311.67**
Other religion X Black	.42
Other religion X MENA	a
Other religion X Other race	.33
No religion X Black	.59
No religion X MENA	a
No religion X Other race	.43
Harassed by Police Due to Race or Ethnicity	31.39**
Controls	b
Constant	.03
N	4,373

Data: Experiences with Religious Discrimination Survey, 2019;
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$;
Estimates weighted to account for sample design and nonresponse; MENA=Middle Eastern, Arab, North African
a. Effect cannot be estimated due to absence of cases in cell or lack of variation in dependent variable within cell.
b. Control measures included in model but effects are not shown.

qualitative accounts of individual experiences with policing, our findings present a quantitative approach to examining the individual experiences of police harassment due to religion. Our findings also demonstrate the added effect of race for Muslims who experience police harassment due to religion.

Similarly, we also find evidence to support our claim that, independent of religion, Black and MENA individuals are more likely to report *religion-based* police harassment relative to White individuals. We find that reported experiences of police harassment due to race and ethnicity are a large contributing factor in increasing greater perceived experiences of police harassment due to religion. Although it is interesting that Black and MENA individuals are more likely to report religion-based

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Table 5. Within Religion Contrasts between Racial Groups in Predicted Probability of Reporting an Experience of Police Harassment Because of Religion

	Difference in Predicted Probability of Reporting Police Harassment Because to Religion	*95% Confidence Interval for Difference*
Christian		
Black vs. White	−.002	[-.03 | .03]
MENA vs White	a	a
Other race vs. White	.001	[-.02 | .02]
Jewish		
Black vs. White	a	a
MENA vs White	a	a
Other race vs. White	.06	[-.01 | .13]
Muslim		
Black vs. White	.20*	[.08 | .32]
MENA vs White	.23*	[.13 | .32]
Other race vs. White	.19*	[.05 | .32]
Other religion		
Black vs. White	−.04	[-.09 | .02]
MENA vs White	a	a
Other race vs. White	−.04	[-.05 | .003]
No religion		
Black vs. White	−.01	[-.04 | .01]
MENA vs White	.12	[-.35 | .59]
Other race vs. White	−.02	[-.05 | .003]

Data: Experiences with Religious Discrimination Survey, 2019; Estimates weighted to account for sample design and nonresponse; N=4,373; MENA=Middle Eastern, Arab, North African; Based on logistic regression model presented in Table 4;
*Difference statistically significant at $p < .05$
a. Not able to estimate due to lack of cases or variation in one of the categories (see Table 4).

police harassment *independent* of religion, the idea that race-based police harassment can negatively influence perceptions of other experiences with police is a novel finding.

Our study contributes to the existing scholarship on race and policing by demonstrating the continued relevance of race in reported police harassment due to religion. While some scholars have already examined religion-based police harassment, there is limited scholarship that illustrates the way that *even within religious groups that report more police harassment,* there is disproportionate policing due to race. Black and MENA Muslims have an added challenge when it comes to experiences with police, not only because of religion but because of race as well. Although outside of the scope of this paper, we also find an added challenge of race for respondents categorized as Other. This follows the broader trend of greater policing among non-White groups.

However, our findings are limited in fully understanding *why* Black and MENA respondents are also more likely to report religion-based police harassment regardless of what religion they identify with. Although we believe that past experiences with race-based police harassment open the opportunity for these groups to perceive police harassment due to other identities, there could be additional factors influencing the perception of religion-based harassment specifically. Our data are based on respondent perceptions of religion-based police harassment; therefore, we do not have enough evidence to know about the actual interactions or motivations of police. While we our data do not capture reported incidents of police harassment, our findings connect to the literature on policing

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that links perceptions of police to past experiences with policing due to other marginalized identities, such as race (Weitzer and Tuch 2004, 2005; Yazdiha 2020). Similarly, we argue that our respondents draw on their experiences with race-based policing to substantiate their perceptions of religion-based police harassment. Although our analysis draws on respondent perceptions, our findings shed light on patterns that are likely the result of how police target specific groups based on visible difference.

For MENA respondents, religion-based police harassment could occur based on what religion police may *perceive* the respondent to adhere to. Existing literature on the racialization of Islam, describes how some non-Muslim MENA individuals are commonly racialized as "Muslim." This may in turn have social implications for the experiences these communities may have with police. Further we acknowledge here that "policing" as used in the scholarly literature may encompass broad law enforcement, including, for example, airport security. The type of data we collected does not allow us to know precisely what respondents conceptualize when think of "police harassment." The positive contribution of these findings, however, far outweigh their limitations.

For example, we have discovered that the racialization of Islam does not provide an adequate explanation for why Black individuals report more religion-based police harassment regardless of how they religiously identify. While Black Muslims may experience police harassment due to their Muslim identity, Black individuals from other faith backgrounds are unlikely to be perceived as Muslim. Our study compels us to begin to think about the extent to which race shapes perceptions of religious experiences. This is not just in the case of Black individuals, but also in thinking about the reported experiences of religion-based police harassment for White Muslims in particular. Although White Muslims may not experience police harassment based on race, other studies (Galonnier 2015) have examined the way that White Muslim women, in particular, can be targets of religious harassment and religion-based racialization. White Muslims can be subject to harassment based on religion if they present themselves as visibly Muslim through markers such as dress. However, our findings show that White Muslims experience significantly less religion-based police harassment than other racial minorities who are Muslim. This implies that racial disparities remain consistent even within marginalized religious communities. Future work should examine the racial disparities within religion-based police harassment for Muslim American communities.

This study provides a necessary link to better understand experiences with policing among marginalized racial and religious communities. While our work builds on previous scholarship, we also provide areas to push forward future scholarship. More consideration should be given to understand the potential impact that past experiences with police have on future perceptions of identity-based police harassment. Overall, this paper is a key steppingstone to uncovering one of the links between race and religious experiences in policing and the impact of overlapping forms of inequality more broadly.

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