

WHERE DO I FIT IN?

ARAB AMERICANS' SELF-CATEGORIZATION,
BELONGING AND IMPLICATIONS FOR WELL-BEING

Nyla R. Branscombe & Nader Hakim
CIFAR & University of Kansas

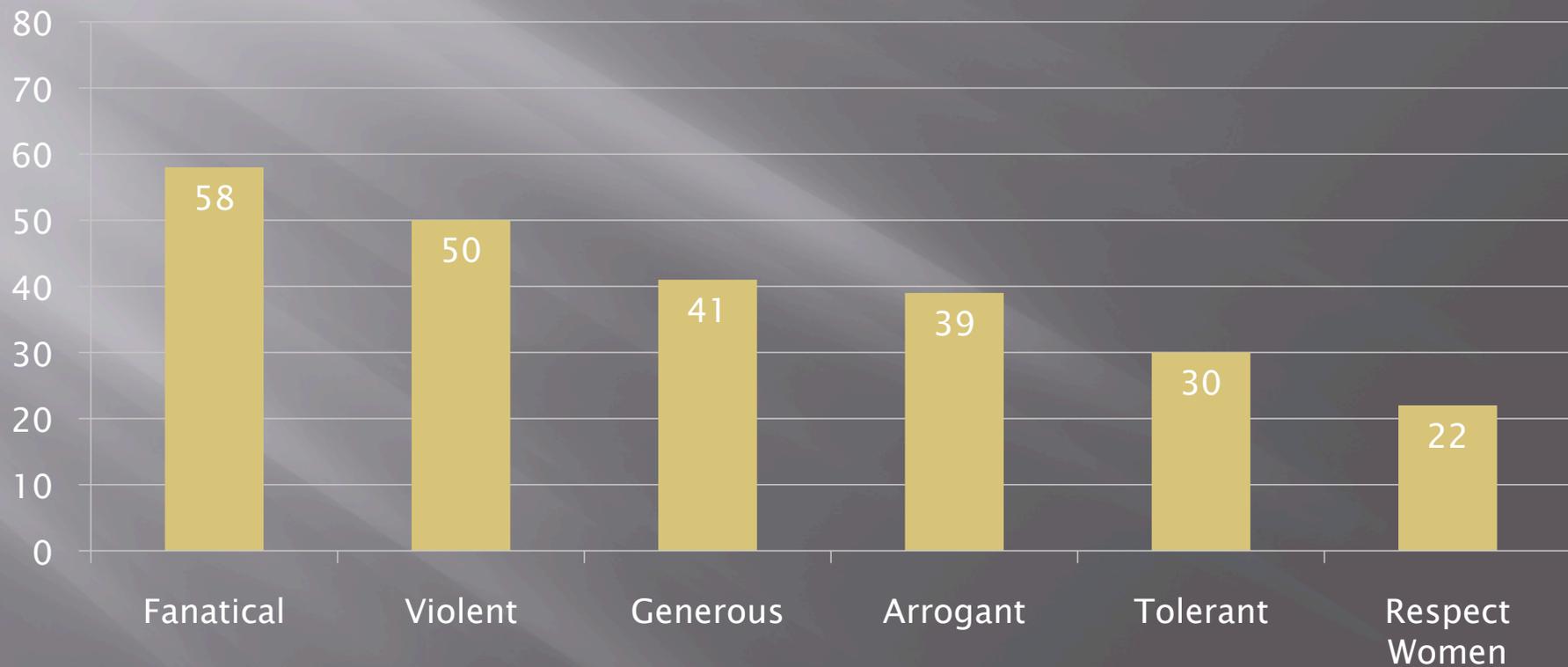


Arab Americans

- ▣ Small minority of US citizens; large concentration in Dearborn, Michigan; “Arab capital of North America”
- ▣ Most are Muslims from Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Palestine
- ▣ History of anti-Arab sentiment, and more generally Islamophobia
- ▣ Recent American Presidential race increased the ante

Stereotypic Traits of Muslims in the U.S.

% Endorsing Traits





SALON

Muslim Americans are being kicked off planes
for being Muslim

Arab American Identity

- ▣ Ted Cruz: “must secure Muslim neighborhoods before they radicalize”
- ▣ DHS: “American Muslims astonishingly cooperative and patriotic”
- ▣ FBI: American Muslim communities (vs France & Belgium) are far more assimilated and “don’t see themselves as victims of prejudice”
- ▣ DHS: “American Muslims are just too happy and prosperous to join ISIS”
- ▣ “Europe has a big problem with terrorism because its Muslim communities are so alienated”

Arab American Identity

- ▣ Can how public institutions treat us affect how we see ourselves?
- ▣ Does both broad social contextual factors and personal experiences influence the extent to which we feel we belong?
- ▣ How are feelings of belongingness (derived from both institutional and personal experiences) connected with health and well-being?
- ▣ Existing research—discrimination harmful for well-being

Arab Americans Study

Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research

- ▣ N=1016 Arab Americans; in-person interviews; adult representative sample in Detroit Metropolitan area
- ▣ 53% female
- ▣ Median income between \$30,000–\$49,999
- ▣ Median education: Some college
- ▣ 71% married
- ▣ 81% US citizens more than 10 years

Arab Americans Study

Assimilation as “White” versus maintain “Other” status in official national documents such as the US Census

→ **NOTE: Please answer BOTH Question 5 about Hispanic origin and Question 6 about race. For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.**

5. Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano

Yes, Puerto Rican

Yes, Cuban

Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin — *Print origin, for example, Argentinean, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, and so on.* ↘

6. What is this person's race? Mark one or more boxes.

White

Black, African Am., or Negro

American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.* ↘

<input type="checkbox"/> Asian Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Japanese	<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian
<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Korean	<input type="checkbox"/> Guamanian or Chamorro
<input type="checkbox"/> Filipino	<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese	<input type="checkbox"/> Samoan
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Asian — <i>Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.</i> ↘	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Pacific Islander — <i>Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on.</i> ↘	

Some other race — *Print race.* ↘

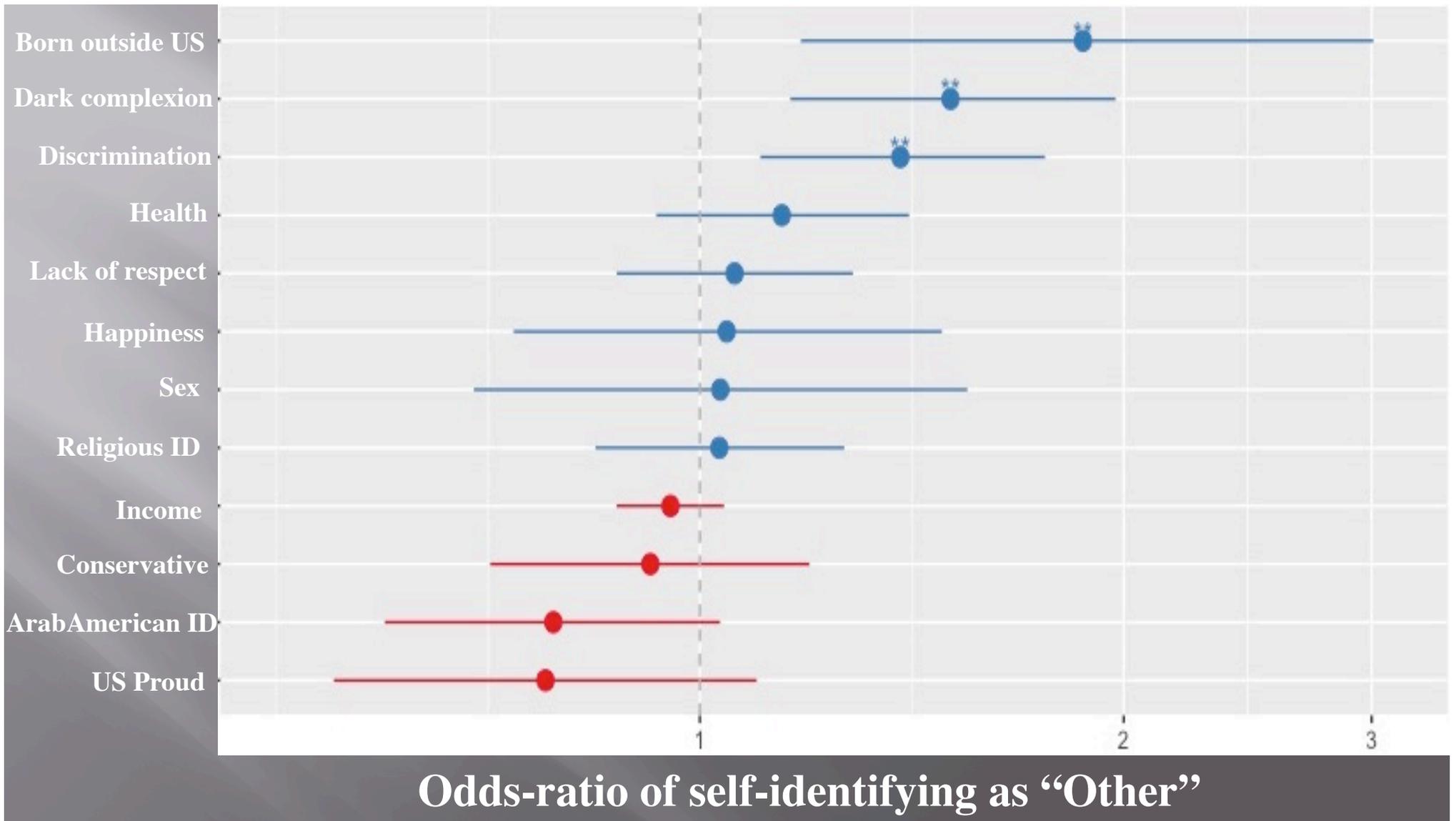
Arab Americans' Self-Categorization Choice

- ▣ If born inside the US, assimilation as White
- ▣ Darker skin, harder to claim Whiteness
- ▣ Treatment of others: Amount of overt discrimination
- ▣ American Identity Pride; Arab American Identity
- ▣ Test Odds of self-categorization as “White” or “Other,” with Well-being and Demographic controls

Arab Americans' Self-Categorization Choice

Overall in this sample of Arab Americans:

- ▣ 66% chose to self-categorize as “White”
- ▣ 34% chose to self-categorize as “Other”



Institutional Lack of Belonging Indicators

- ▣ U.S. Census—ethnic group unacknowledged
- ▣ Perceived biased mass media coverage of Arabs & Muslims
- ▣ Disrespect of Arabs in American society
- ▣ Post 9/11 lack of solidarity & feeling at home in America

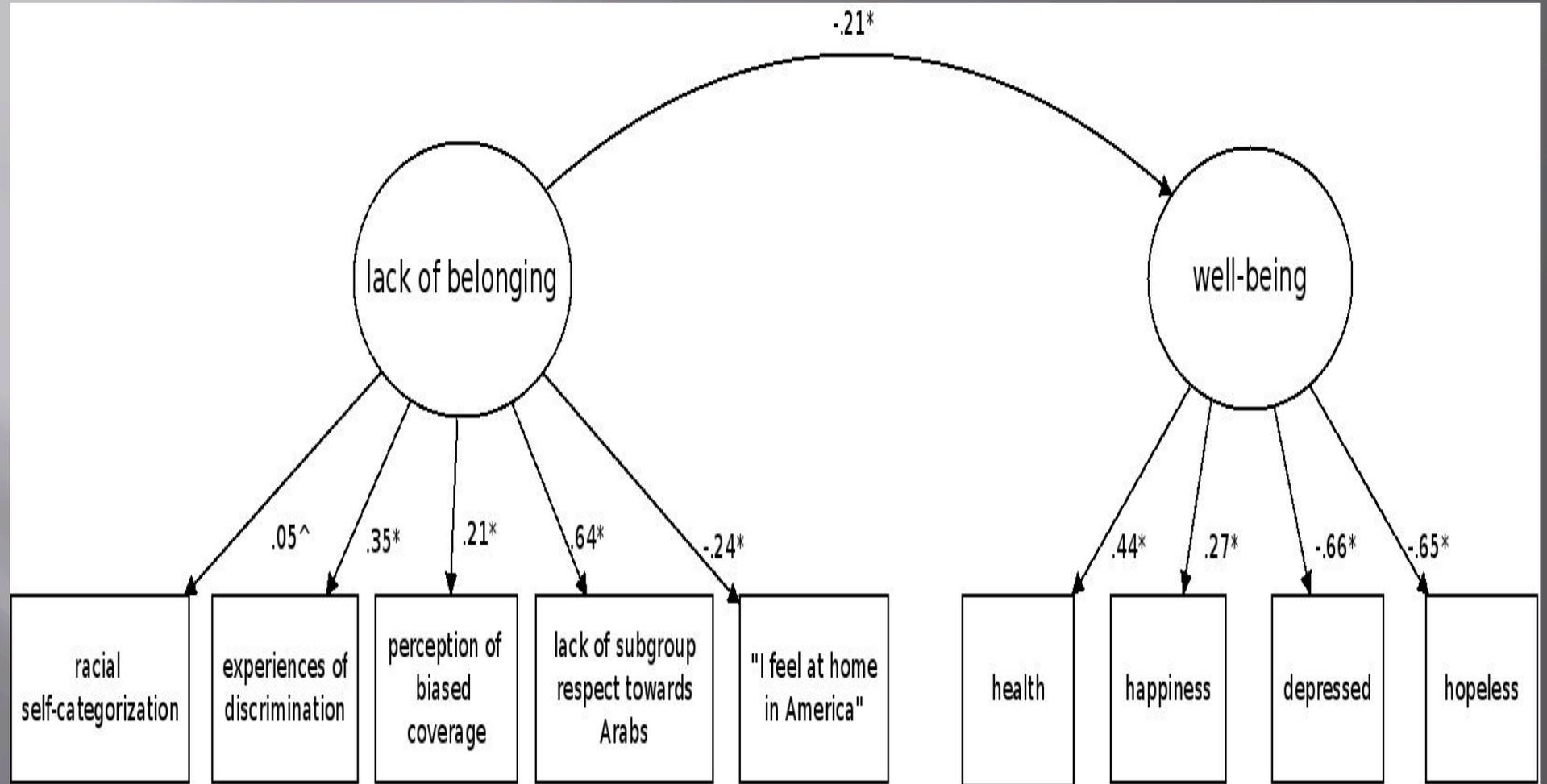
Personal Experiences of Lack of Belonging

Has Experienced Discrimination or Hate Crime Due to Arab heritage; Yes/No (0–5)

- ▣ Verbal insults or abuse
- ▣ Threatening words or gestures
- ▣ Physical attack in public settings
- ▣ Vandalism or destruction of property
- ▣ Loss of employment

Physical and Psychological Health Indicators

- ▣ Physical Health: “How would you describe your overall state of health these days?”
- ▣ Happiness: “Taking all things together, would you say you are very happy, happy, not very happy, or not happy at all?”
- ▣ Depression
- ▣ Hopelessness



Conclusions

- ▣ Subtle or explicit signals of exclusion
- ▣ Self-categorization as “other”—reflection of social environment
- ▣ Both institutional and personal treatment predicts belongingness
- ▣ Lack of belongingness predictive of poor well-being, including hopelessness
- ▣ Concern should be with treating Arabs/Muslims in ways that undermine belongingness