

Chapman University

Chapman University Digital Commons

Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and
Posters

Center for Undergraduate Excellence

Spring 5-3-2023

Why Education Matters: Understanding Islamophobia in the United States

Cintya Felix

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts



Part of the [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Islamic Studies Commons](#), and the [Other Education Commons](#)



Why Education Matters: Understanding Islamophobia in the United States

Cintya Felix

Department of Political Science, Chapman University; Orange, California

Introduction to Research

• Since 9/11, there has been a significant increase in anti-Muslim racism which can be linked to misinformation, misconception, and stereotypes reinforced by a lack of an educational upbringing. In this research project, the extent to which an individual's education level in the United States contributes to Islamophobia.

• Based on an original data set of responses to the questions in the **Chapman University Survey of American Fears (CSAF) Wave 3**, there is a strong relationship between the highest level of school an individual has completed or the highest degree they have received, and the degree to which they are afraid of Muslims.

• While it is true that **various factors** such as political affiliation, cultural background, and the media contribute to Islamophobia, a lower level of education will prove to be the main indicator of an increased Islamophobic perspective.

• Moreover, **education** can be used to inform non-Muslims regarding Islamic culture, enforce stricter regulations against Islamic discrimination, and ultimately decrease Islamophobia-related behavior like hate crimes. Education (or the lack of it) has tremendous power to challenge phobic attitudes and move beyond the traditional realm of what has historically been the norm in American society.

Islamophobia

Although a relatively new term, is anything but a new form of **hate**.

While "Islamophobia" claimed popular purchase before the rise of Trump and gained widespread resonance during the campaign as he called for "a **total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States**", Islamophobia long preceded this.

It is a system that redeploys stereotypes of Muslims deeply rooted in the collective American imagination and endorsed by formative case law, foundational policy on immigration and citizenship, and the writings and rhetoric of the nation's founding fathers.

Although it is a **global phenomenon**, American Islamophobia is fluidly shaped and impacted by uniquely American stimuli, including its legal and political systems, history, racial and religious demographics, and private interests and actors.

Hypotheses:

H 1: The lower the level of education attained by an individual, the more likely they are to feel distrust Muslims

H 2: The lower the level of education attained by an individual, the more likely they are to think that it is ok for Muslims to receive extra screening at the airport.

H 3: The lower the level of education attained by an individual, the more likely they are to believe that Muslims are likely to engage in terrorist actually than non-muslims

Data

H 1: Education and distrust towards Muslims

Cross Tabulation "education" categories are divided as follows:

1= Less than 9th grade

This includes those with no formal education, only elementary school, only middle school, and/or some 9th grade.

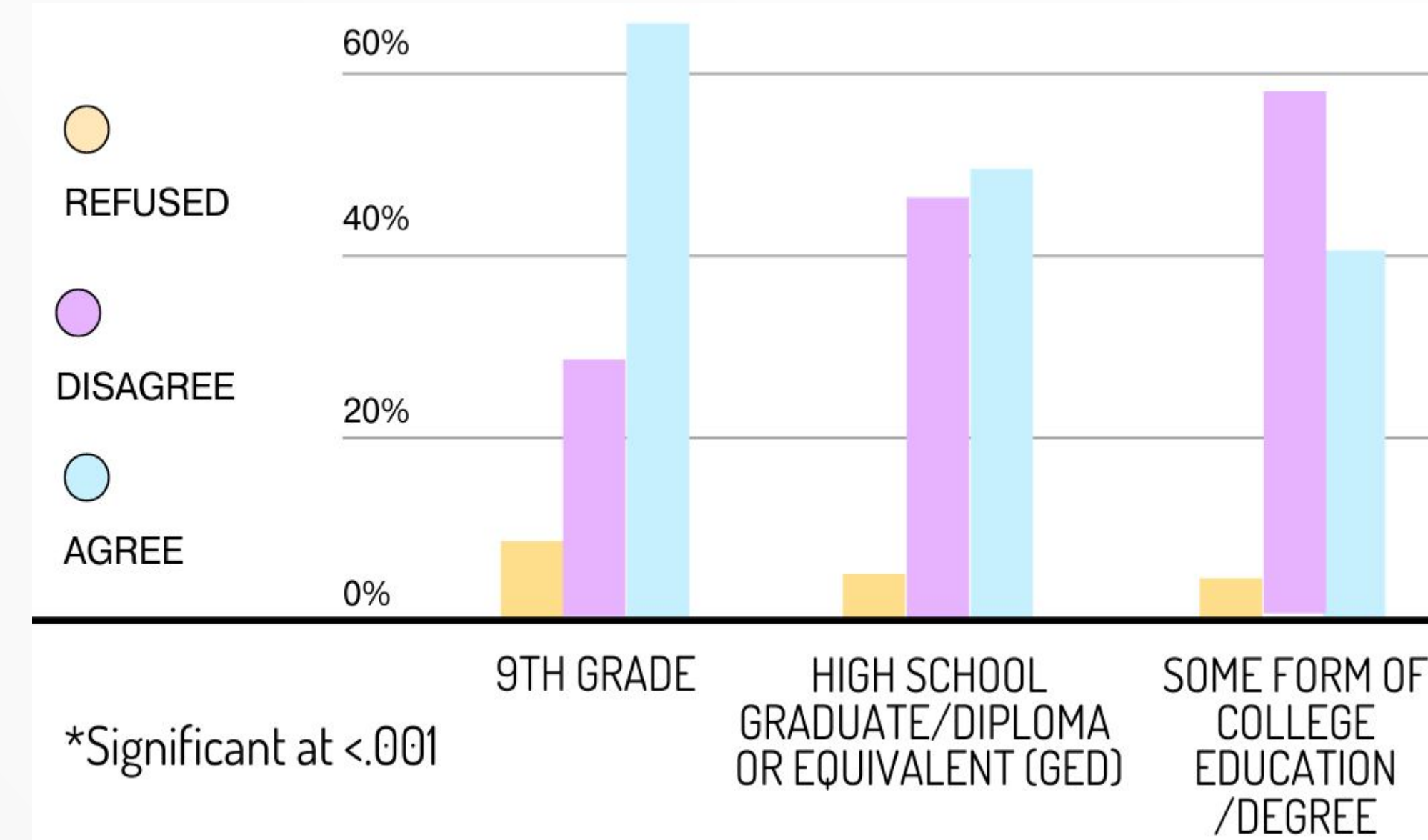
2= High school graduate

Diploma or the equivalent (GED)

3= Some form of college education/degree

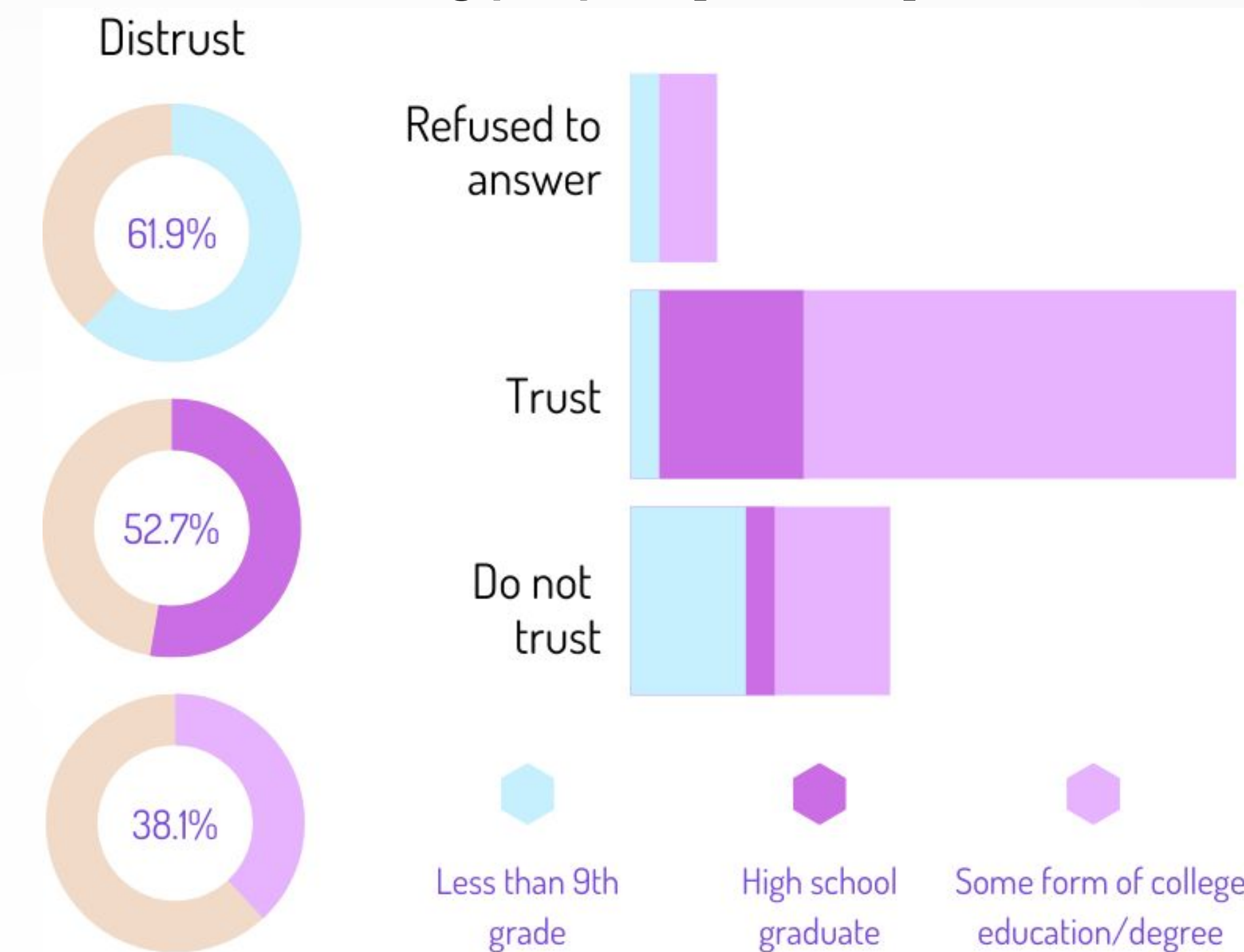
This includes some college without degree, Associate degree, Bachelors degree, Masters degree, and/or Professional or Doctorate degree.

H 3: Education [Highest Degree Received] * Please indicate your level of agreement with the following: [Muslims are more likely to engage in terrorist activity than non-Muslims.] Cross Tabulation



	9th	High school	College
Refused	7.14%	2.81%	2.13%
Disagree	28.57%	46.87%	57.05%
Agree	64.29%	50.32%	40.82%

H 1: Education [Highest Degree Received] * How much do you trust the following people? [Muslims] Cross Tabulation



	Less than 9th	High school	College
Refused	9.52%	2.38%	2.24%
Trust	28.57%	44.92%	59.62%
Do not trust	61.91%	52.7%	38.14%

Data Interpretation

- The table above measures the highest educational degree received by an individual (independent factor) in relation to their trust towards people who identify as Muslim (dependent factor).
- Based on the H1 and H3 results, those with lower levels of education are more likely to refuse to respond to the questions.
- Education in the form of highest degree received has a significance level of <.001. *Those who marked their education attainment as 9th grade or lower tend to believe that Muslims are more likely to engage in terrorist activity, and tend to not trust Muslims.*
- There is a negative correlation between trust and the belief that Muslims are more likely to engage in terrorist activity.
- Those who only reached a high school graduate diploma or the equivalent tend to distribute their opinions on Muslims more evenly between "agree" and "disagree", "trust" and "do not trust."

Findings

H 1: Distrust towards Muslims

While the results showed that individuals who completed less than 9th grade reported a rate of 61.91% not trusting Muslims, this rate increases significantly if we only take into account those with no formal education. About 71.42% of individuals with no formal education do not trust Muslims. In contrast, 37.21% of those with a professional or doctorate degree reported not trusting Muslims.

H 2: Extra screening at the airport for Muslims

The results demonstrate that 65.22% of respondents with less than a 9th grade education agree that it is ok for Muslims to receive extra screening at the airport. In contrast, 53.58% of those with some form of college education or degree agreed.

H 3: Belief in the greater likelihood of Muslims engaging in terrorist activity

Although the results indicate that 50.32% of individuals with a high school diploma or the equivalent agree that Muslims are more likely to engage in terrorist activity, this rate is not uniform among the different levels in the high school education category. For instance, 48% of those with some 12th grade completed (no diploma) agree, while 33.33% of those who only completed the 11th grade agree.

Conclusions

- Respondents with no formal education have a greater tendency to refuse to answer the questions related to Muslims.
- The lower the level of education attained by an individual, the more likely they are to not trust Muslims, to think it is ok for Muslims to receive extra screening at the airport, and to think they are likely to engage in terrorist activity.
- It is important to recognize the role that education plays in feelings and opinions on people who practice Islam in the United States.

References

- Beydoun, Khaled A. *American Islamophobia: Understanding the Roots and Rise of Fear*. University of California Press, 2018. Accessed 1 May 2023.
- Brooks, Sarah. "Teaching High School Students About Islam in a National Context." EBSCOhost Login, 2019. <https://discovery.ebsco.com/c/wmu3Dviewer/pdf?h?v6rc5ax5?auth-callid=30bac4f6-ccac-976c-891e-6dfb2580943b>
- Chapman University. 2018. *The Chapman University Survey of American Fears, Wave 5*. Orange, CA: Earl Babbie Research Center [producer].
- Douglas, S. L., & Dunn, R. E. (2003). Interpreting Islam in American schools. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political Science*.
- Kleppner, A. (2014). High school students' attitudes toward Islam and Muslims: Can a social studies course make a difference? *The Social Studies*.
- Komurcu, Osman. "The Roots of Islamophobia in Contemporary Europe: The Results of an Empirical Research." Chapman Leatherby Libraries, 2019. <http://europolity.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/VOL-13-2-08-KOMURCU.pdf>.
- Moore, J. R. (2009). Why religious education matters: The role of Islam in multicultural education. *Multicultural Perspectives*.
- Zaidi, Rahat. "Islamophobia and Education." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, 25 Jan. 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.231>