



## Attitudes of Muslim Americans Regarding Prejudice and Discrimination Displayed by Non-Muslims

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### Abstract

Muslim Americans have reported experiencing racial profiling, physical threats, and verbal abuse based on their religion, ethnicity, and color (Samari, 2016). These types of lived experiences can have negative personal consequences for Muslim Americans and influence their attitudes and behavior toward non-Muslims. A literature review conducted by Simon et al. (2018) suggests the need for research that explores the point of view of minorities regarding intolerance displayed by majority members. Intolerance is defined as the refusal and unwillingness to tolerate or respect individuals from different social or minority groups who hold different beliefs. Prejudice and discrimination can hinder the discovery of new information needed to promote positive social change by influencing social boundaries among groups based on their negative lived experiences (Ellis & Abdi, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the attitudes of Palestinian Muslim Americans in Cleveland, Ohio, regarding prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims. The theory of planned behavior was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Purposeful and convenience sampling were used to recruit the 10 participants in this study. Giorgi's (2012) psychological method, coding, and template analysis were used to perform data analysis. The study revealed the participants described prejudice and discrimination among Muslims and non-Muslims as "good and bad" or "it depends." The study also found participants used the terms "we versus they" or "us versus them" when describing the behavior displayed by non-Muslims. Information discovered from this study can be used to develop new social strategies that can help improve the social interactions among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States.

**Keywords:** *attitudes, culture, discrimination, non-Muslims, Muslim American, prejudice*

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### Introduction

The behaviors and concerns of non-Muslims about the integration of Muslims in the United States have been openly expressed and have involved physical and verbal attacks, racial profiling, and a proposed ban on Muslims during a 2016 presidential campaign (Samari, 2016). Exclusion of Muslims from citizenship or

membership in society is motivated by the perceived negative association of Muslim identity by non-Muslims (Selod, 2014). Attacks on Muslim Americans by non-Muslims have been motivated by the belief that Muslims pose a threat to American society (Selod, 2014). These types of social experiences can have negative personal consequences for Muslim Americans who attempt to assimilate and become productive citizens in the United States. *Attitudes* are defined as the negative or positive evaluation of an object, group, person, issue, or concept (American Psychological Association, n.d.-a).

Participants selected for this study were Palestinian Muslim Americans who reside in Cleveland, Ohio. Many non-Muslims support harsh civil restrictions for Muslim Americans and associate the religion of Islam with violence (Saleem et al., 2017). Muslims of different racial and ethnic backgrounds have become common targets of discrimination, which has been well-documented by recent literature (Zainiddinov, 2016).

*Discrimination* is defined as the differential treatment of people based on their ethnicity, religion, or nationality (American Psychological Association, n.d.-b). Further research is needed in the United States examining the point of view of minorities regarding the intolerance displayed by majority members (Simon et al., 2018), a gap in the literature that is addressed in this study. As noted by Canan and Foroutan (2016), the religion of Islam and Muslim people tend to trigger negative attitudes and derogative behavior from non-Muslims, who often support government surveillance and harsher restrictions on civil liberties involving Muslims in the United States (Choma et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2017).

Compared to other groups in the United States, Muslim Americans are more likely to experience discrimination based on their race or religion (Zainiddinov, 2016). Recent literature has shown that American media has represented Muslims and people of Arab or Middle Eastern descent as violent terrorists, which has influenced the negative attitudes and prejudiced beliefs of non-Muslims toward Muslim Americans (Saleem et al., 2017). *Prejudice* is defined as the negative feeling toward a person or group in advance of any experience (American Psychological Association, n.d.-c). Compared to beliefs and stereotypes, emotional prejudices are more closely related to racial, observed, and self-reported discrimination (Talaska et al., 2013). *Emotional prejudice* is defined as emotions that are differentiated toward outgroups (as cited by Talaska et al., 2013). Due to the negative portrayals and stereotypes of Muslim women in the United States, some Muslim women in the United States have reported removing their hijab as a result of the prejudice and discrimination they experienced.

The *hijab* is a head garment used by many Muslim women as a way of expressing their beliefs and religious faith (Mohibullah & Kramer, 2016). Muslim women who wear the hijab have reported becoming targets of physical and verbal assaults from non-Muslims in the United States (Selod, 2014). Reports have shown those who are perceived to be Muslim or identify as Muslim American were targeted and denied employment (Samari, 2016). Identifying as “the target of discrimination is a major source of stress,” affecting the individual’s physical and mental well-being (Ali et al., 2015, p. 155). Since the conflict and wars involving the United States and Muslim countries such as Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), as well as the events of September 11, 2001, and an increased focus on the “war on terror,” many Muslim Americans have reported experiencing an increase involving stereotyping, stigmatization, prejudice and discrimination (Amer & Bagasra, 2013; Khan, 2014; Lamont & Collet, 2013; McDowell-Smith, 2013; Mohibullah & Kramer, 2016; Rosenthal et al., 2015; Zainiddinov, 2016).

Incidents reported by Muslim Americans involve racial profiling at airports, vandalizing and defacing mosques, and harassment on college campuses (Samari, 2016). A study conducted by Khan (2014) found that Muslim participants changed their routines for fear of experiencing discrimination and violence from non-Muslims. Recent studies investigating racial bias indicate emotional prejudices are more direct predictors of discrimination (Talaska et al., 2013). Muslim Americans have also reported experiencing discrimination based

on their ethnicity and race (Zainiddinov, 2016). Discrimination towards members of this population can have adverse consequences by increasing risk factors, stress, and physiological processes (Samari, 2016).

According to Fiske (2019), prejudice is a negative emotional reaction toward individuals and groups, while discrimination is an action that is motivated by the prejudice that people hold toward others. Lived experiences associated with prejudice and discrimination can influence the attitudes and decision-making of Muslim Americans toward non-Muslims. The research question addressed in this study was: *what are the attitudes of Muslim Americans regarding prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims? Non-Muslim* is a term used to define a person who does not hold any Islamic religious beliefs or identify as Muslim.

Ajzen's (1991) *theory of planned behavior* was used as the theoretical framework for this study, which states that the intentions of people are motivated by their beliefs regarding the expectations of others, their attitudes, as well as the degree of control regarding the behavior performed. According to Ajzen (1991), perceptions and intentions involving behavioral control can significantly contribute to the prediction of behavior, in which intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence behavior. Perceived physical or emotional threats towards members of this population have influenced many Muslim Americans to conceal their group identity (Khan, 2014).

Although research has been conducted about prejudice and discrimination, conducting research that explores the attitudes of Palestinian Muslim Americans regarding prejudice and discrimination can help in discovering new information not found in previous literature, an argument that is supported by the gap in the literature that emphasizes the point of view of minorities (Simon et al., 2018). Conducting research that explores the attitudes of members of this population can help to identify the behaviors and consequences regarding the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims (Ellis & Abdi, 2017). Potential knowledge obtained from this research can help in the development of new social strategies that are needed in promoting positive social change among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States.

## Theory of Planned Behavior

Described by Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, intentions are believed to be influenced by the person's attitudes, beliefs about the expectations of others, and the degree of control regarding the behavior performed. According to Ajzen (1991), behavior is not only influenced by individual attitudes, but also by the social pressures they experience. The belief of individuals about the outcome of their behavior and the perceived interpretations of others influences their decision-making (Ajzen, 1991).

The theory of planned behavior states that behavior is motivated by three kinds of considerations: normative, behavioral, and control beliefs (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000). The theory of planned behavior emphasizes the importance of understanding the cognitive regulation that influences and motivates behavior. According to Ajzen (1991), perceived behavior control plays a strong role in determining the intentions of individuals, which in turn influences the person's decision-making.

## Method

A qualitative research method was chosen to explore the attitudes of Palestinian Muslim Americans regarding the prejudice and discrimination displayed by the majority members, allowing me to obtain a holistic picture and study the phenomena in its natural setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Thompson, 2018). Although other qualitative designs, such as ethnography or case studies, could have been used for this study, I chose a phenomenological design based on its focus on understanding how people's experiences, detailed descriptions of events, and attitudes held influence their interpretation and meaning of their social environment (Alase,

2017; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Challenges and difficulties have been reported in previous studies involving the recruitment of Muslim Americans and their unwillingness to participate in studies based on their fears that “the researcher is working for the government or would manipulate the data to cause harm to the community” (Amer & Bagasra, 2013, p. 139). The researcher shares the same origin of descent as the participants recruited for this study and socially identifies as Muslim American. Possible issues involving the unwillingness and distrust of the participants regarding the purpose of the study may have been mitigated by the shared origin of descent and social identity of the researcher.

## Participants

After obtaining approval from the university’s Institutional Review Board in 2020, flyers were posted at local Middle Eastern businesses in Cleveland, Ohio, which were used to recruit the participants for this study. To reach saturation, interviews were conducted with 10 participants who met the eligibility criteria required to participate in the study. The representative sample for this study consisted of five female and five male Palestinian Muslim Americans over the age of 18 who reside in Cleveland, Ohio. The eligibility criteria involving the recruitment, selection, and interviews of the participants were (a) being at least 18 years of age, (b) being of Palestinian descent, (c) residing in Cleveland, Ohio, and (d) identifying as a Muslim. All the names of the individuals selected to participate in this study have been changed to maintain confidentiality. The demographics of the participants are indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1:** *Participant Demographics*

Participant Identifier	Gender	Age	Occupation
F1	Female	40	Childcare worker and college student
F2	Female	29	Stay-at-home mom
F3	Female	22	College student
F4	Female	36	Stay-at-home mom
F5	Female	31	Stay-at-home mom
M1	Male	27	Business owner
M2	Male	29	Barber
M3	Male	38	Undisclosed or unknown
M4	Male	18	Undisclosed or unknown
M5	Male	24	Undisclosed or unknown

## Procedure

Prior to posting flyers at local businesses, consent was obtained from partner organizations. Local Middle Eastern businesses consisted of barbershops, Middle Eastern grocery stores, and restaurants located in Cleveland, Ohio. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.), the demographics of Cleveland, Ohio in 2020 were 47.6% Black or African American, 39.7% White, 5.8% of two or more races, 3.5% other, 2.5% Asian, 0.4% American Indian, and 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

The participants who were selected for this study responded through information obtained from flyers posted in local businesses. The information included (a) a phone number to call, (b) the need for Muslim American participants who reside in Cleveland, Ohio, (c) the focus of the study, (d) the possible benefits and contributions of the study. Recruitment and selection of the participants consisted of purposeful criteria sampling, information power, and data saturation. Potential participants who responded to the flyers and expressed their willingness and interest in the study were screened to determine their eligibility before being selected to participate.

After the eligibility of the participants was determined, all participants were contacted and invited to meet in a private conference room at a public library located in Cleveland, Ohio to sign a consent form expressing their willingness to participate. Participants were also provided information regarding the purpose and potential benefits of the study, procedures involving participant confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of their participation. All participants were interviewed in a private conference room at a local library in Cleveland, Ohio. Participants were informed that the interview process may take 30 minutes to an hour to provide participants ample time to respond to the interview questions (see Appendix A). The interview questions for this study were reviewed and validated by a content expert and were used to conduct semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the participants.

## Analysis

After obtaining consent, interviews were conducted using hand-written notes and an audio recording device to ensure the accuracy of the participants' responses. The average length of the interviews was approximately 12 minutes, and they were transcribed using Microsoft Word. To ensure the accuracy of their responses, participants were asked to review the transcripts (member checking). Bracketing was used to help avoid the influence of researcher bias. Giorgi's principles of psychological phenomenological method and template analysis were used to analyze the data, which allowed for the extensive review of the data collected in this study.

Giorgi's method was used to interpret the data of this study, which is consistent with a phenomenological design that focuses on how individuals understand and interpret their social world (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi et al., 2017; Jackson et al., 2018). Tables containing the transcribed and participant reviewed raw data were created using Microsoft Excel, which was used to code, identify, and review emergent themes and significant meanings. Two tables were created, one for the male and one for the female participants. The tables were divided into four columns: (1) participant identifier, (2) interview questions, (3) participant responses, and (4) emerging themes and codes.

Giorgi's psychological phenomenological method was used to interpret the raw data as a whole, which helped to gain a holistic understanding of the participant responses. The data was reviewed again to identify and highlight significant descriptions and meanings, allowing for the categorization of meaningful units. Words, emerging themes, and significant phrases from the participants' responses and meaningful statements were recorded and categorized using codes.

Meaningful units were carefully reviewed to identify subthemes, thematic categories, and the merging of relevant similarities. To discover the differences, similarities, underlying trends, or meanings in the participants' responses, similar code words and phrases were highlighted to create themes and subthemes, as well as establish the trustworthiness of the interpreted data. Saturation was reached by continuing to sample and analyze the collected data until no new data appeared and all concepts were well-developed; ensuring the quality and rigor of the study, as well as preventing inadequate examples and concepts during the analysis (Hayashi et al., 2019; Mason, 2010; Saunders et al., 2018).

## Results

The interview questions developed allowed the researcher to obtain a full description of the participants' responses and address the research question for this study, the attitudes of Muslim Americans regarding the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims (see Appendix A). Emerging themes and subthemes from the participants' responses to the interview questions provided explanations and meanings of their attitudes regarding the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims. Emerging themes during the analysis of the data were the result of the similarities regarding the attitudes described by the participants' responses.

The attitudes described by the participants consisted of the concept of "we versus they" or "us versus them." Participants also reported prejudice and discrimination among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States as "good and bad" or "it depends" on the event, situation, or audience that is present. Emerging subthemes during the analysis of the data were developed based on similarities regarding the attitudes described by the participants. The following sections provide an overview of the attitudes of the participants regarding the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims.

### **Theme 1: Prejudice and Discrimination**

Eight of the 10 participants interviewed reported experiencing prejudice and discrimination from non-Muslims. When participants were asked what they thought influences prejudice and discrimination towards Muslim Americans, Mona responded by stating, "I believe it occurs because the news, the social media feeds different things that shouldn't even be said or done because one person decides to do something, they automatically turn everyone in that background into that person." Similar to Mona, Miriam responded by stating, "It's normal now, you want the truth, it's normal. This is not the first, it's probably not going to be the last. You anticipate it at this point, to be honest."

Abed, a male participant in the study, responded by stating, "To be honest with you, I don't know. That's how it is. You got a racist president." Ahmad, one of the only two participants in the study who reported not experiencing prejudice and discrimination, stated, "I don't think people are forced to get along or anything like that. I think we're [Muslims] always gonna be looked at differently. We might run across somebody that's racist; we might run across somebody that's not racist."

#### **Subtheme 1: Ignoring or Avoiding Non-Muslims**

In order to avoid experiencing the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims, three of the 10 participants in the study mentioned ignoring or avoiding non-Muslims. Musa responded by stating, "honestly, I really don't take it to heart. I'm the type of person that I try not to let it bother me." Similarly, Ahmad stated, "I never took it personal. For me, it was just always 'kill them with kindness.'" Dena, a female participant, also expressed similar views, "I just ignore them. I just move along with the day. I just try not to get involved with them."

### **Theme 2: Lack of Education or Ignorance**

Five of the 10 participants specifically mentioned a lack of education or ignorance. For example, Kamal responded by stating, "Ignorance. To be honest, the way the media portrays us as Arabs and Muslims in general." Dena responded, "I don't know, I would say they do it out of ignorance, they don't know any better, I guess, or they don't wanna know any better." Fatima, one of the only two participants who reported not experiencing prejudice and discrimination stated, "I think they're just going based off their opinions and not actual knowledge or what Islam is about."

### **Theme 3: “Us Versus Them” or “We Versus They”**

Four of the 10 participants interviewed in this study expressed their attitudes in terms of “us versus them” or “we versus they.” When describing her experiences as a Palestinian Muslim American, Sara stated, “I live my life normal. I eat like them, I mean, besides the pork or alcohol, I don’t do that. My kids go to school just like their kids. You know, we go to the park the way they do.”

Similarly, Kamal responded by stating, “They look at you differently, they talk to you differently, and they basically get scared of you, they think you’re from outer space.” Musa responded by stating, “Going through the airport, they see you speaking Arabic or going through the TSA, you’re with your family that’s wearing the hijab, they tend to look at you in scrutiny and search you a lot longer.” Finally, Abed also responded by stating, “There’s a couple of times I’ve been racially profiled when I went to Starbucks, they racially profiled me, they didn’t want to serve me.”

#### **Subtheme 1: “Good and Bad” or “It Depends”**

Four of the 10 participants in the study described relations among Muslim Americans and non-Muslims in the United States as “good and bad” or “it depends.” Kamal stated, “It’s been good and bad, me being as a Palestinian, a lot of Americans know the struggle we’ve been through, and they stand by us and some of them it’s bad, depending on how you look at it.” Similarly, Abed also stated, “it’s good and bad, it’s good when I don’t get racially profiled, it’s bad when I do.” Miriam, a female participant also stated,

It depends on the situation. There are times where we could be somewhere and meet someone and just strike up a conversation with me, it’s pretty cool. Then you can go somewhere and feel it’s an uncomfortable situation, not every situation is the same and not every area that you happen to be is the same.

Similarly, Dena stated, “I guess it’s not that bad, it depends on where you live too.”

### **Theme 4: Lived Experiences**

Participants were asked how they felt as a Muslim American in the United States. Hasan, who reported experiencing prejudice and discrimination, stated, “I like it here, here in the United States you can do whatever you want. Me, being Muslim American, showing my religion and beliefs here is normal.” Musa reported his overall experience stating, “My experience is good, other than certain situations, I really don’t have any complaints to be honest with you, for the most part I’m ok with living in this country other than the few racist situations that happened.” Fatima, one of the two participants who reported not experiencing prejudice and discrimination due to her physical appearance, which is perceived by non-Muslims as other than Middle Eastern, stated,

I’ve had a pretty good life. I’ve been raised by a good family, I’ve had really good opportunities and like I said, I’m one of the few people that haven’t experienced it the way that a lot of Muslims or Palestinians have faced.

### **Theme 5: Additional Attitudes Expressed**

Participants were asked at the end of each interview, “Is there anything else you would like for me to know?” Four of the 10 participants interviewed in this study provided additional information about their attitudes regarding the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims towards Muslim Americans. Hasan, the only male participant to provide additional information, stated,

I feel like everybody should be nice to one another, respect one another, whether you’re Muslim or non-Muslim and everybody be treated equally, if you do have smart remarks or anything to say, keep

it to yourself and if you have questions, we're more than happy to answer any questions for you. If anybody has any questions you can always come up to us and feel free to ask us.

Miriam added, "I don't think it's ever going to change, what's going on in the world, it's unfortunate. People understand differences, everybody tolerates what they wanna tolerate, what they choose to tolerate." Fatima, who reported not experiencing prejudice and discrimination, added, "I feel like if people actually learned about Islam and learned about what it teaches us and learned about how Muslims are raised, it would really open the eyes of people that judge and mistreat us." Mona also stated,

I think the biggest thing on this is just don't judge the book by its cover, give the person a chance, hear them out, meet them as a person, not as where they're coming from or what they think that person is like another Muslim or non-Muslim. Everyone deserves their chance to be able to show themselves as the person that they are, not as what was being said to them or what bad experiences, they've had with one another.

## Discussion

The results of this study support the gap presented in previous literature and the need to understand the point of view of minorities regarding the intolerance displayed by non-Muslims (Simon et al., 2018). Four of the 10 participants interviewed for this study reported ignoring or avoiding non-Muslims based on the prejudice and discrimination they experienced.

Dena, a female participant interviewed for this study stated, "I just ignore them. I just move along with the day. I just try not to get involved with them." As described by Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, people tend to avoid or are less likely to perform acts involving uncertain or perceived negative outcomes.

In contrast to the participant who reported avoiding non-Muslims, Kamal described having a friendly relationship with his non-Muslim neighbors based on the exchange of information regarding his religion and who he is as a person. He stated, "If you have a neighbor that's non-Muslim and he knows you personally, he knows what kind of character you are and how you practice your religion." According to the theory of planned behavior, intentions are influenced by the person's beliefs regarding the outcome of their behavior and the interpretation and reactions of others, which in turn influences the person's intentions and decision-making toward others (Ajzen, 1991).

Sara, a female participant interviewed for this study, reported using her physical appearance as a way of concealing her identity as a Palestinian Muslim American, which helps her avoid the negative reactions of non-Muslims. She also described what occurs after revealing her true identity, stating, "I have to correct them and say, 'no, I'm Palestinian' and that's when the whole thing starts." Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior states, behavior is not only motivated by the attitudes of individuals, but also the social pressures they experience.

Dena, a female who reported experiencing prejudice when walking alone, stated, "I just don't leave anywhere as much, as long as it's with my husband." Another example of the argument presented by Ajzen (1991) was reported by Abed who described his experience at a local café. He stated, "they racially profiled me, they didn't want to serve me." As a result of his negative experience at the café, Abed stated he no longer goes to the same café. The attitudes and behavior described by the participants in this study regarding the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims demonstrate the importance of understanding the point of view of members of this population. The findings of this study also support the need for new social strategies that help to promote positive social change among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States.

## Limitations of the Study

The attitudes explored in this study were limited to Palestinian Muslim Americans located in Cleveland, Ohio, and do not represent the overall attitudes of Muslim Americans of different ethnicity or who reside in other states. The attitudes explored in this study were of adults over the age of 18 and do not explore the attitudes of individuals under the age of 18 who may have different experiences depending on their daily activities, routines, and age. The phenomenological design used to explore the attitudes of the participants is dependent on the ability of the participants to accurately recall previous events, which may not include important factors that were not recalled by the participants. Another limitation of this study is the possibility of unintentional bias involving the response of the participants, which is based on their interpretation and beliefs regarding the event being described.

The events described by the participants in this study are dependent on the testimony of the participants and were not directly observed by the researcher. Although face-to-face interviews were used to obtain the information for this study, the information represents the point of view of the participants, which may be indirectly altered based on their emotions. Also, it was assumed that all participants provided accurate and truthful details regarding the events described in this study.

## Recommendations

Further research is needed that explores the attitudes of Muslim Americans who reside in other cities and states within the United States, those under the age of 18, and of different ethnicity. Further research is also needed that explores the attitudes of non-Muslims regarding the race or ethnicity of Muslim Americans, which may help in identifying other variables not discussed in this study that may influence the social behavior among these groups. Expanding on the findings of this study can help create a broader understanding of the attitudes of Muslim Americans regarding the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims. Developing social strategies that encourage and motivate social interactions among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States can allow for the exchange of new information and help mitigate preconceived judgments about outgroup members.

As noted by Rosenthal et al. (2015), encouraging polyculturalism was found to be associated with less negative behavioral intentions and evaluations towards Muslim Americans. Developing social strategies that allow for the discovery of new information can help minimize misconceptions among Muslims and non-Muslims. According to Ellis and Abdi (2017), developing programs and social/economic conditions that increase civic engagement and strengthen ties can help strengthen the social cohesion among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States.

Developing community events that encourage members to engage and share information can help influence an inclusive shared identity among members of different cultural and religious backgrounds. As noted by McDowell-Smith (2013), influencing an inclusive shared identity among Muslims and non-Muslim community members is needed in reducing intergroup bias and increasing trust. These types of social events can be developed by local leaders, public officials, and private citizens, which allows community members of different religious and cultural backgrounds to share similar concerns, interests, and lived experiences within their communities. Recategorizing ingroups and outgroups to an inclusive single group (community members) can help to reduce intergroup bias and transform representations from “us” versus “them” to an inclusive “we” (McDowell-Smith, 2013).

As emphasized by McDowell-Smith (2013), social events that bring people of different cultural and religious backgrounds together can help mitigate prejudice and discrimination among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States. In order to promote intergroup trust and positive intergroup relationships, assurance is

needed that an outgroup has positive intentions (Choma et al., 2018). The social strategy presented in this study can help promote positive social change among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States, while also creating an observable social model that may help improve the relations among other groups not discussed in this study.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about a situation in which you feel that your religious background influenced the way you were treated.
  - a. Probe: Tell me how this experience made you feel? (If not directly answered)
2. Tell me about a situation in which you feel that your ethnic background influenced the way you were treated.
  - a. Probe: Tell me how this experience made you feel? (If not directly answered)
3. What is your experience as a Palestinian Muslim American, living in the United States?
  - a. Probe: Could you describe some of the activities you experience throughout your day? (If not directly answered)
4. Tell me about your experience regarding the prejudice displayed by non-Muslims.
  - a. Probe: Where have you experienced it the most? (If not directly answered)
  - b. Probe: Why do you think it occurs more in this type of setting? (If not directly answered)
5. Tell me about your experience regarding the discrimination displayed by non-Muslims.
  - a. Probe: Where have you experienced it the most? (If not directly answered)
  - b. Probe: Why do you think it occurs more in this type of setting? (If not directly answered)
6. Can you tell me how you feel regarding the social behavior among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States?
7. I appreciate your time and willingness to participate in the interview. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me that you feel is important for me to know?



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