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Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Department of Psychology

An Examination of the Moderating Effect of Intergroup Anxiety on the Relationship between
Intergroup Contact and Islamophobia

Ahmed Ghuman, MA, MS, LPC

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

Doctor of Psychology

July, 2015

**PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

Dissertation Approval

This is to certify that the thesis presented to us by Ahmed Ghuman on the 29th day of July, 2015, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology, has been examined and is acceptable in both scholarship and literary quality.

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Last, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to those who have been victims of Islamophobia during the tenure of my dissertation from start to completion. I regret that I cannot mention you all by name, but here are a few incidents that have trembled within my heart a deep sense of remorse and sadness:

- Deah Barakat and Yusor Abu-Salha, a newlywed couple of Syrian and Turkish descent, and the bride's younger sister Razan Abu-Salha of Turkish descent, all three of whom were students, were shot in the head and murdered by a man inside their apartment in Chapel Hill, NC.
- Abdisamad Sheikh-Hussein, a Somali teenager in Kansas City, MO was run over and killed by a man with an SUV that displayed an anti-Muslim message in the rear window.
- Mukhtar Ahmed, a Pakistani man was murdered while driving in Louisville, KY, having been shot by a man multiple times through the window of his car.
- Ahmed al-Jumaili, an Iraqi refugee, was shot dead by a teenager with a shotgun while he, Ahmed, was taking photos of snowfall outside of his apartment in Dallas, TX.

I pray that God envelop them with His mercy, forgiveness and favor, and grant them the highest stations of paradise. Also, I pray that God grant their families with patience, peace and perseverance. May God (glory to Him, the Exalted) bless and protect our Ummah and everyone that is suffering around the world for "verily, this Ummah of yours is a single Ummah..." -21:92.

Abstract

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 have led to feelings of disdain against Islam and have perpetuated Islamophobia in America. Research suggests that intergroup contact can help improve intergroup relations and reduce both prejudice and discrimination against members of out-groups. The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not intergroup anxiety moderates the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia. Research has shown that intergroup anxiety has been associated with increased negative attitudes toward Muslims, but that reduced levels of intergroup anxiety lead to increased intergroup contact with Muslims and improved out-group attitudes. Participants included 214 community members of various liberal and conservative forums. Participants were given an online survey, which included a demographic questionnaire and measures on Islamophobia, intergroup contact, and intergroup anxiety. The hypotheses for this study were: 1) intergroup contact, as well as factors such as race, religious orientation, political orientation and media exposure will be significant predictors of Islamophobia; 2) intergroup anxiety will moderate the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia. Results indicated that as contact with Muslims increases, Islamophobia decreases. Results also suggested that Republicans and participants that rely on Fox News for their main source of news tend to be Islamophobic. Furthermore, results indicated that intergroup anxiety does not moderate the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia. However, results determined that participants who experienced intergroup anxiety were more likely to be Islamophobic. The findings of this study may serve to stimulate research on Islamophobia and address the various components that influence it.

Keywords: Islamophobia, intergroup contact, intergroup anxiety

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Chapter One

Statement of the Problem

Following the tragic events of 9/11 when Muslim terrorists attacked America, hate crimes against Muslims increased by 1700% (Federal Bureau of Investigation crime statistics, cited in Sheridan and Gillet, 2005). The media reported a substantial amount of discrimination toward individuals who identified with Islam (Byers & Jones, 2007). In addition to Muslims, other minorities and foreigners perceived to be Muslim faced intolerance, distrust, hostility, discrimination and racist violence following the events of 9/11 (Orhun, 2009). The terrorist attacks of 9/11 led to feelings of disdain against Islam and have had enduring consequences for Muslims such as violence, physical and verbal abuse, vandalism of Islamic institutions, institutionalized discrimination, and overt prejudice (Allen, 2010; Hall, 2004; Laird et al., 2007; Runnymede Trust, 1997; Sway, 2005).

The phenomenon of contempt and antipathy toward Muslims is known as Islamophobia (Orhun, 2009). Islamophobia is defined as a fear of Islam that perpetuates prejudice and discrimination against Muslims that can, in turn, generate feelings of stigmatization, marginalization and rejection among Muslims (Allen, 2010; Bleich, 2011; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008; Orhun, 2009; Runnymede Trust, 1997; Bleich, 2011). Islam has been associated with terrorism and has been regarded as a threatening religion that embraces violence (Allen, 2010). Consequently, Islam has triggered a generalized fear of Muslims among Americans (Ernst, 2013). A study by Kunst et al. (2013) demonstrated a prevailing fear of Muslims in the Western world that was positively correlated with individuals' exposures to anti-Islamic sentiments in the media.

With the rising fear of Islam, disparagement of Muslims has also increased in the Western world (Allen, 2010; Akbaba & Fox, 2011; Park, Felix & Lee, 2009). Research shows that mainstream Americans view Muslims both as racial and as religious minorities (Kalkan et al., 2009). Some studies have also provided evidence of decreased religious tolerance of Islam and Muslims post 9/11 (Gieling, Thijs & Verkuyten, 2010; Livengood & Stodolska, 2004; Raiya, Pargament, Mahoney & Trevino, 2008). Research has further suggested that discrimination toward Muslims is perpetuated by negative attitudes against Islam (King & Afra, 2010; Verkuyten & Zaremba, 2005). With the ongoing globalization of Islam, the increasing prevalence of Islamophobia has become a growing concern for Muslim citizens (Allen, 2010). Consequently, it has become equally important to assess the factors that perpetuate Islamophobia and sustain anti-Islamic sentiments and the enduring fear of Muslims (Bleich, 2011).

A series of hostile actions and attacks against the United States since the 1970s and the 9/11 attacks, in particular, have led to Muslims being perceived as threatening (Allen, 2010; Woods, 2011). Threat perception is a reliable predictor of out-group attitudes (Wike & Grim, 2010) and the prevailing threat and fear of other cultures and religions lead to increased levels of prejudice and discrimination against those seen as the “other” (Corenblum & Stephan, 2001; Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Florack et al., 2003; Legault, Green-Demers, 2012; Pettigrew et al., 2007; Riek, Mania & Gaertner, 2006). Research has suggested that emotions strongly influence intergroup relations; therefore, examining the prevalence of fear of Islam in non-Muslims should clarify mainstream attitudes toward Muslims (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Lee et al., 2013; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000).

According to Allport’s (1954) intergroup contact hypothesis, one of the most effective strategies for improving intergroup relations is creating opportunities for contact with an out-

group member. Such exposure can improve intergroup attitudes and reduce both prejudice and discrimination (Allport, 1954). A meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) examined over 500 studies and found that increased intergroup contact was significantly associated with decreased prejudice and discrimination. Having confirmed the efficacy of intergroup contact on improving intergroup relations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), research has focused on variables affecting the relationships between intergroup contact and prejudice and discrimination (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2010).

One variable that has received significant attention is intergroup anxiety, which refers to the ambiguous feelings of apprehension often experienced during actual or anticipated out-group contact (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Research has determined that intergroup anxiety moderates the association between intergroup contact and decreased levels of prejudice (Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Gonzalez, Sirlop, Kessler, 2010; Voci & Hewstone, 2003). Increased intergroup anxiety directed towards Muslims has been correlated with a decrease in the quality of contact with Muslims and has led to increased negative attitudes toward Muslims (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2010). In contrast, reduced levels of intergroup anxiety lead to increased intergroup contact with Muslims and improved out-group attitudes, better perceived out-group variability and a more positive perception of out-group behavioral intentions (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2010; Jung, 2012; Tausch, Hewstone & Roy, 2009). Ultimately, intergroup anxiety strongly influences prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors, which can be ameliorated through intergroup contact (Stephan et al., 2000; Voci and Hewstone, 2003).

Increased intergroup contact can decrease prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors toward Muslims and intergroup anxiety moderates the effect of intergroup contact on prejudice and discrimination (Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2010; Jung,

2012; Tausch, Hewstone & Roy, 2009). Despite the idea that fear is a common reaction toward Muslims and the religion of Islam (Bleich, 2011; Poynting & Mason, 2007), an investigation of the moderating effect of intergroup anxiety on intergroup contact and fear of Muslims in the context of Islamophobia in the U.S. has yet to be examined. It is important to examine Islamophobia in the general American population and also the factors that can influence its pervasiveness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not intergroup anxiety moderates the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia. Research has shown that intergroup anxiety has been associated with increased negative attitudes toward Muslims, but that reduced levels of intergroup anxiety lead to increased intergroup contact with Muslims and improved out-group attitudes (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2010; Jung, 2012; Tausch, Hewstone & Roy, 2009). With the growing number of Muslims in the world, it is imperative in the field of psychology to better understand how to decrease discrimination and prejudice and ultimately to reduce the pervasiveness of Islamophobia (Byers & Jones, 2007).

Chapter Two

Islamophobia

Introduction

On September 11th, 2001 (9/11) Muslim terrorists hijacked four planes (Woods, 2011). Two of the planes crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City, New York, one plane crashed into the Pentagon in Washington D.C, and one plane, which officials believed was headed toward the White House, was found crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, (Woods, 2011). The terrorist attacks of 9/11 resulted in the death of 2,992 people and forced Americans to endure the threat of terrorism (Scheufele, Nisbet & Ostman, 2005; Woods, 2011). Many Americans responded to Islam with fear and hatred, leaving Muslims to defend their religious identities (Lee et al., 2013). Ultimately, the events of 9/11 led to a rise in anti-Islamic sentiment in the West (Allen, 2010; Lee et al., 2013).

Islam is currently the second largest religion in the world and is rapidly growing (Desilver, 2013). There are approximately 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, comprising nearly 25% of the world's population (Desilver, 2013). With the growing number of Muslims in the world, it has become increasingly important to understand attitudes toward Muslims (Pew Research Center, 2011). The present study will examine the relationships between intergroup contact, intergroup anxiety and Islamophobia, the fear of Muslims. The paper will discuss in detail the various aspects of Islamophobia including its origin, history, prevalence, and the effects of policy and the media on Islamophobia.

Misconceptions of Islam

Several misconceptions of Islam deserve careful consideration (Runnymede Trust, 1997). Islam is often viewed as a monolith that opposes Western civilization and refuses to share collective values and ideologies (Johnston, 2006; Runnymede Trust, 1997). However, Islam is a diverse and progressive religion that emphasizes a state of equality and a sense of democracy (Ahmed, 2010; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). In the West, misconceptions exist not only about the Islamic belief system, but also about its believers; men are seen as radical fundamentalists and women as oppressed (Lewis & Churchill, 2008; Ernst, 2013). What is often overlooked is the fact that in the East, Islamic beliefs and tenets are filtered through cultural values relating to aspects such as gender and sexuality, and skewed as a result (Allen, 2010; Runnymede Trust, 1997). For example, Islam preaches that men and women should dress modestly but says nothing about women covering their hair (Ernst, 2013; Esposito & Kalin, 2011). Culture influences the way in which the term “modestly” is interpreted (Ernst, 2013; Lean, 2012). In Pakistan and Iran, women have not historically worn the veil, whereas in Saudi Arabia they have (Ernst, 2013).

Islam is also often criticized in the West for being intolerant of other religions (Kaplan, 2006). Islamic principles, however, accentuate the importance of accepting other religions, particularly the Abrahamic faiths such as Christianity and Judaism that are known to progress over time in accordance with Islamic beliefs (Ahmad, 2010; Esposito & Kalin, 2011). The negative portrayals of Islam in the media have further perpetuated these prevailing misconceptions about Islam and Muslims (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). Central to the current study, however, are the many misconceptions surrounding Islam as a religion of violence (Allen, 2010; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008).

With the rise of terrorism throughout the world, Islam is often portrayed as a threatening and aggressive religion that promotes violence and embraces terrorism (Johnston, 2006; Kaplan, 2006). A survey by the Media and Society Research Group showed that 47% of Americans believe that Islam promotes violence (Nisbet & Shanahan, 2004). A similar poll found that 49% of Americans believe that Muslims are violent; 47% believe that Muslims are dangerous; 45% believe that Muslims are radical and 35% believe that Muslims are hateful (Nisbet & Shanahan, 2004). The popularity of the belief that Islam is a violent religion belies the fact that Islam is fundamentally a religion of peace that does not condone violent acts of terrorism associated with Muslim extremists and radicals (Allen, 2010; Esposito & Kalin, 2011). Misconceptions of Islam and Muslims, supported and perpetuated by media, have created a culture of fear of Islam, or Islamophobia in the West (Bail, 2012; Ishak & Solihin, 2012; Lean, 2012; Sheehi, 2011). Islamophobia not only serves to exclude and alienate Muslims as “others,” but also leads to tragic consequences such as racial profiling, discrimination and hate crimes, thereby creating a sense of fear and defensiveness in Muslim communities (Allen, 2010; Esposito & Kalin, 2011).

What is Islamophobia?

Islamophobia is a term that has been used widely across public, social, political, economic and academic spheres (Bleich, 2011). The diversity and fluidity of its meaning has allowed it to be used in various forms of scientific research (Lee, Gibbons, Thompson & Timani, 2009). Researchers in the past have operationally defined Islamophobia as negative attitudes toward Muslims (Bleich, 2011), prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors toward Muslims (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011) and a fear of Muslims (Lee et al., 2009). In general, Islamophobia refers to a fear of Islam that perpetuates prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory

behaviors towards Muslims (Allen, 2010; Bleich, 2011; Ernst, 2013; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008; Lee et al., 2009; Poynting & Mason, 2007; Runnymede Trust, 1997).

Islamophobia is often understood both as an affective and as a cognitive component of social stigma towards Muslims that manifests feelings of fear, anxiety and dread, which often lead to discrimination against and the rejection of Islam (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008; Bleich, 2011). The term is further denoted as indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed towards Muslims, based on perceived feelings of irrefutable threat that are perpetuated by the widespread notion of Islam as a monolithic enemy of the West (Lopez, 2011; Bleich, 2011; Zuquete, 2008). The following sections will discuss the history of this phenomenon, along with its prevalence and consequences for Muslims. They will also examine the role of media and policy in fomenting Islamophobia.

History of Islamophobia

Islamophobia is a term that was popularized in the 21st century following the events of 9/11 (Allen, 2010; Bleich, 2011; Lopez, 2011), but the phenomenon can be traced as far back as the 17th century (Allen, 2010; Ernst, 2013; Lopez, 2011). The Anglican theologian Humphrey Prideaux in 1697, the French philosophe Voltaire in 1742, the American journalist Charles Godfrey Leland in 1874, and Paul Casanova in 1911 published literature disparaging the teachings of Muhammad and expounding the threat of Islam (Lopez, 2011). The works of these authors and of others perpetuated anti-Islamic sentiments over the course of succeeding centuries through public criticisms of the teachings of Islam (Allen, 2010; Ernst, 2013; Lopez, 2011). These anti-Islamic sentiments traveled not only through time but also around the world as technological advancements made possible the globalization of information. Eventually, anti-

Islamic discourse was present in public, social, political and economic arenas throughout the Western world (Bleich, 2011; Ernst, 2011; Poynting & Mason, 2006).

Although the articulation of anti-Islamic sentiments can be traced back to the 17th century, the term Islamophobia was first proposed in 1922 by Etienne Dinet who suggested that anti-Islamic sentiments were prevailing in the Western world and that a perpetual fear of Muslims was mounting (Allen, 2010; Bleich, 2011; Love, 2009). In the United States, this fear grew as a result of four historical Islamic terrorist attacks on the United States (Allen; 2010; Ernst, 2013). During the Iranian Revolution in 1979, fifty-two American diplomats were held hostage for 444 days when the United States Embassy in Tehran, Iran was seized (Allen; 2010; Ernst, 2013; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). In 1993, Muslim terrorists bombed the World Trade Center, causing the deaths of six people and injuring over a thousand (Allen; 2010; Ernst, 2013; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). In 1998, Muslim terrorists bombed the United States' embassy in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, Kenya, killing hundreds of American employees (Allen; 2010; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). Last, the terrorist attacks by Muslims in 2001 resulted in the deaths of 2,992 people (Allen, 2010; Scheufele, Nisbet & Ostman, 2005; Woods, 2011). As the preceding events induced an upsurge of anti-Islamic sentiments against Muslims, Islamophobia became a growing concern (Allen; 2010; Ernst, 2013; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008; Scheufele et al., 2005).

As a result of this impending concern that continued to worsen following subsequent terrorist attacks, the Runnymede Trust published a comprehensive report on Islamophobia in 1997, highlighting the challenges that Muslims face in the world (Allen, 2010; Runnymede Trust, 1997). The report highlighted challenges such as physical and verbal abuse that Muslim

individuals were experiencing, in addition to the prejudice and discrimination directed toward Islam (Runnymede Trust, 1997).

The globally disseminated report by the Runnymede Trust popularized the term 'Islamophobia,' which was later used in various forms of public discourse such as media reports, government statements, books, films and documentaries (Allen, 2010; Love, 2009). The United States government and media aided in shaping the discourse around Islam and Muslims, and specifically the discourse of Islamophobia, which served to justify, politically and economically, the global War on Terror (Allen, 2010; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008; Sheehi, 2011).

Prevalence of Islamophobia

Attitudes toward Muslims

The events of 9/11 led to increased levels of hostility and resentment toward Muslims in America (Woods, 2011), and polls and surveys conducted over the last decade show that negative perceptions have not abated, despite the lack of additional terrorist attacks (Panagopoulos, 2006; Yum & Schenck-Hamlin, 2005.) Researchers have demonstrated a decrease in religious tolerance of Islam and Muslims post 9/11 (Gieling, Thijs & Verkuyten, 2010; Livengood & Stodolska, 2004; Raiya, Pargament, Mahoney & Trevino, 2008). This negative perception continues to exist, even though American Muslims have made it a point to abide by civil liberties, refrain from political violence, and denounce violence and terrorism (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). Nearly a decade later, anti-Islamic sentiments has remained prominent with 43% of Americans reporting prejudice towards Muslims and 53% of Americans reporting a negative perception of Islam (Gallup News Service, 2010). One reason why Americans continue to harbor negative perceptions may be that anti-Islamic sentiments predated the events of 9/11 in the Western world and that the events of 9/11 and subsequent media

portrayals of Islam as a religion of violence served to further entrench them (Chahuan, 2005; Scheufele et al., 2005). For instance, the number of Americans who believe that Islam promotes violence and terrorism against non-Muslims has more than doubled in the aftermath of 9/11 (Deane & Fears, 2006).

These negative perceptions translate into prejudicial attitudes by Americans towards Muslims (Deane & Fears, 2006; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). A survey done almost a decade after 9/11 showed that Americans' opposition to wanting to be neighbors with a Muslim increased by 8% since 2000 (Schafer & Shaw, 2009). In addition, more than 66% of Americans reported a willingness to limit civil liberties in order to fight terrorism and 25% of Americans reported that Muslims should have restrictions placed on their civil liberties (Etzioni, 2002; Huddy, Khatib & Capelos, 2002). A poll conducted 10 years after 9/11 found that roughly half of Americans believe that Islam opposes American values, indicating that they would feel uncomfortable with a mosque in their neighborhoods, seeing a Muslim praying in an airport, seeing a Muslim woman fully covered in Islamic attire and having a Muslim teacher in their school districts (Marrapodi, 2011). Additionally, a study by Kalkan et al. (2009) explained that mainstream Americans view Muslims both as racial and as religious minorities, therefore maintaining negative perceptions of Islam.

Among mainstream Americans, Whites, Christians and Republicans are more highly inclined to maintain negative perceptions of Muslims and to be significantly more Islamophobic than any other demographic group (Chahuan, 2005; Lee et al., 2009; Ponterotto et al., 1995; Rowatt et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2003). These findings are consistent with previous research that has demonstrated that Whites, Christians and Republicans are more likely to sustain prejudicial beliefs about Muslims and Islam (Chahuan, 2005; Ponterotto et al., 1995; Rowatt et al., 2005;

Wang et al., 2003). Park et al. (2007) conducted a study examining the strength of implicit attitudes toward Arab Muslims, utilizing an Implicit Association Test (IAT). Their results indicated that participants had a preference for Whites and Blacks over Arab Muslims (Park et al., 2007). Despite the longstanding prejudice against Blacks in U.S. history, Arab Muslims have managed to elicit stronger negative, implicit attitudes toward them as a result of 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks (Allen, 2010; Park et al., 2007).

To account for anti-Islamic attitudes, some researchers have suggested that individuals that harbor anti-foreigner feelings or xenophobia, are more likely to display negative attitudes toward Muslims (Gonzalez, Verkuyten, Weesie & Poppe, 2008; Helbling, 2010; Kalkan, Layman & Uslaner, 2009; Stolz, 2005). However, many researchers believe that Islamophobia is far more ubiquitous than xenophobia as a result of 9/11 (Allen & Nielson, 2002; Dunn, Klocker & Salabay, 2007; Sheridan, 2006; Strabac and Listhaug, 2008). A study comparing Islamophobia and xenophobia found that anti-Islamic sentiments are more widespread than negative feelings toward foreigners (Spruyt & Elchardus, 2012). Although xenophobia may account for Islamophobic attitudes for some individuals, it does not account for the popularity of anti-Islamic sentiments in the general population. Xenophobia also falls short in accounting for the global prevalence of anti-Islamic attitudes that exacerbate the ubiquity of Islamophobia. Compared with xenophobia, Islamophobia is a much more widespread phenomenon because it applies not only to foreign-born Muslims, but also to native-born Muslims and converts.

Although the 9/11 attacks targeted U.S. citizens and led to a backlash against American Muslims, anti-Islamic sentiments have been a prevailing concern for Muslims around the world (Allen, 2010; Johnson, 2006; Livengood & Stodolska, 2004; Sheehi, 2011). Concerns about national security have fueled anti-Islamic sentiment in North America and Europe (Johnston,

2006; Savelkoul, Scheepers, Veld & Hagendoorn, 2012; Wike & Grim, 2010). A study assessing anti-Islamic sentiments in Europe found that prejudicial attitudes against Muslims were significantly greater than prejudicial attitudes against any other race, religion or ethnicity (Strabac & Listhaug, 2008). In examining anti-Islamic attitudes in six Western countries, researchers found that Germany harbors the strongest level of Islamophobia followed by the Netherlands, Spain, France, Canada, the United States and Great Britain in descending order (Savelkoul, Scheepers, Veld & Hagendoorn, 2012). The findings are intriguing, considering the fact that the United States has undergone one of the largest terrorist attacks in world history (Allen, 2010; Savelkoul et al., 2012; Sheehi, 2011).

The events of 9/11 have resulted in the dissemination of negative perceptions of Islam in America. Consequently, they may have galvanized Islamophobia in the rest of the world as a result of the U.S. response to the attacks and the framing of Muslims as a global enemy without borders. Despite the effort of Muslim Americans to abide by civil liberties and express their discontent with terrorism, the deleterious perception of Islam has intensified prejudicial attitudes toward Muslims. A review of hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims in America will further elucidate this point.

Hate Crimes against Muslims

Negative attitudes toward Islam have perpetuated hate crimes against Muslims in America (Morgan, Wisneski & Skitka, 2011; Woods, 2011). Levels of hate crimes against Muslims in America have increased post-9/11 and have continued to remain higher than pre-9/11 levels (Morgan et al., 2011). More than 700 acts of violence were reported in the first 9 months following 9/11, a significant increase compared with the 10 incidents that were reported from 1998-2000 (Ibish, 2003; Kaplan, 2006). According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI),

the number of hate crimes against Muslims rose significantly from 33 in 2000 to 546 in 2001 (FBI Hate Crime Statistics, 2000-2001). The increase in hate crimes reported by the FBI consisted of 4 murders, 49 assaults and 109 attacks on mosques (Human Rights Watch, 2002). The number of violent actions against Muslims in the week following the events of 9/11 alone was estimated to be about 520 (American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 2001). In the years following the events of 9/11, anti-Islamic hate crimes have exceeded the pre-9/11 level by approximately 60% (FBI Hate Crime Statistics, 2002-2012). The fact that hate crimes continue to occur at a higher level than they did before 9/11 provides evidence that negative attitudes toward Muslims were further entrenched after 9/11, and are responsible for perpetuating discrimination and violence against Muslims (Allen, 2010; Ibish, 2003; Kaplan, 2006).

Hate crimes have caused various problems for Muslims in America, including feelings of a decreased sense of safety (Allen, 2010; Ernst, 2011). The Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, Michigan, which is the largest mosque in America, became the focal site of violent protests where Americans would gather to shout derogatory statements about Islam, vandalize property, burn Qurans and evoke controversy (Ernst, 2011). Moreover, Muslim women in America have endured some of the greatest challenges as a result of the backlash from 9/11 (Esposito & Kalin, 2011). They have been discriminated against, physically attacked, verbally abused and at times demoralized for wearing a hijab (headscarf) (Ernst, 2011; Esposito & Kalin, 2011). Islamophobia affects not only Muslims, but also other racial and ethnic minorities who may be perceived as Muslims because of their features, skin color or dress (Moreno, 2010; Ernst, 2011; Esposito & Kalin, 2011). Days after the events of 9/11, an Indian man who appeared to be Muslim because of a turban he was wearing in accordance with his Sikh faith was shot and killed

by a Caucasian male who justified his behavior as defending his country against Muslim terrorists (Moreno, 2010).

Hate crimes against Muslims continue to prevail in America (Ahmed & Shoichet, 2015; Draper & Hollingsworth, 2015; Keneally, 2015; McCormack, 2015; McDermott, 2015; Wang, 2015; Warikoo, 2015). In 2015: the Islamic School of Rhode Island in Warwick, RI was vandalized with graffiti when hate messages and Nazi imagery were tagged on the exterior of the school (McDermott, 2015); the Quba Islamic Institute in Houston, TX was burned down as a result of arson (McCormack, 2015); an Arab man was assaulted in Dearborn, MI by two White men for speaking in Arabic to his children (Warikoo, 2015); a Pakistani man who was driving in Louisville, KY, died after being shot multiple times through his window by a White man (Wang, 2015); an Iraqi man was shot dead by a Black teenager with a shotgun while the man was taking photos of snowfall outside of his apartment in Dallas, TX, (Keneally, 2015); a Somali teenager in Kansas City, MO was run over and killed by a Somali Christian man with an SUV that displayed an anti-Muslim message in the rear window (Draper & Hollingsworth, 2015); a newlywed couple of Syrian and Turkish descent, and the bride's younger sister of Turkish descent, all three of whom were students, were shot in the head and murdered by a White man inside their apartment in Chapel Hill, NC (Ahmed & Shoichet, 2015). Hate crimes are an extreme and violent form of discrimination, but Muslims have experienced several other forms of discrimination as well; this has limited their sense of belonging and has accentuated their differences from other American citizens and residents.

Discrimination against Muslims

The events of 9/11 have led to increased discrimination against Muslims; this discrimination consists of scrutinization, accusations of anti-Americanism, protests against the

building of mosques, restrictions on and racial profiling during air travel, disparities in healthcare, and discrimination in employment (Ernst, 2011; Hussain, 2011; Ibish, 2003; Laird et al., 2007; Morgan et al., 2011). Immediately after 9/11, reporters, journalists, and investigators rushed to Dearborn, Michigan in Greater Detroit, home to the largest and most firmly established Muslim community in America, to seek answers (Ernst, 2011). Dearborn became the first American city to house a Homeland Security office and the FBI headquarters in Greater Detroit has executed the largest counterterrorism investigation in US history as a result of 9/11 (Ernst, 2011). Further, many Imams in Greater Detroit and the rest of America were forced to record their sermons in order to defend themselves against accusations of anti-Americanism that they began facing after 9/11 (Allen, 2010; Ernst, 2011; Morgan et al., 2011).

The intolerance and opposition to opening mosques, particularly the proposal for the Ground Zero mosque in New York, have constituted some of the most openly public forums for the expression of anti-Islamic sentiments (Hussain, 2011). Furthermore, many Muslims have experienced challenges in air travel (Ibish, 2003; Morgan et al., 2011). In the months following 9/11, nearly 100 American passengers were removed from airplanes for being Muslim (Ibish, 2003). Passengers have been illegally removed from flights on every major airline in America as a result of passengers or crew members experiencing feelings of discomfort (Morgan et al., 2011).

Growing Islamophobia has also negatively impacted access to healthcare and has further contributed to disparities in healthcare among Muslims (Hall, 2004; Laird et al., 2007; NIH, 2001). Research has demonstrated noticeable differences in the incidence, prevalence and mortality resulting from diseases and various other health conditions, which, in turn, has led to increased mental health issues among Muslims (Hall, 2004; Laird et al., 2007; NIH, 2001; Rippy

& Newman, 2006; Sheridan, 2006). A study by Padela and Heisler (2010) demonstrated that Muslim Americans have faced increased levels of abuse and discrimination, correlating with increases in psychological distress, reduced levels of happiness and decreases in overall health.

Additionally, research has documented workplace discrimination against Muslims in the United States (Ahmed, 2010; Sheridan, 2006) and also greater prejudice, when compared with prejudices against African Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans (Bushman & Bonacci, 2004), indicating a rejection of the Islamic faith (King & Afra, 2010). Evidence has suggested that religious affiliation is a greater predictor of discrimination than race or ethnicity (Sheridan, 2006). A study on religious discrimination toward Muslims found that implicit discrimination increased by 82.6% but explicit discrimination increased by 76.3% post 9/11 (Sheridan, 2006).

Furthermore, the degree to which an individual is visibly identified as Muslim is a major determinant of the vulnerability to discrimination (Allen & Nielsen, 2002). A study by Brown et al. (2013) found that individuals who are perceived to be Muslim based on their ethnicity or their attire are targets of discrimination. Consequently, Muslim women are more susceptible to discrimination than men because of their attire (Allen & Nielsen, 2002). A study by Ghumman and Ryan (2013) explained that Muslim women who wear hijab are more likely to experience discrimination during the employment application process.

Muslims' (and those perceived to be Muslims) experiences of discrimination in numerous aspects of life not only underscores the fact that Islamophobia is prevalent, but also that it has a negative impact on psychological and physical health for Muslims (Allen & Nielsen, 2002; Sheridan, 2006). Poor mental health and medical outcomes increase vulnerability in Muslim communities and can create a vicious cycle whereby these very factors can serve to further

perpetuate stereotypes and perceptions of Muslims as “inferior” and “un-American.”

Islamophobia, however, is not unique to the U.S., and similar negative attitudes and perceptions have been observed in other countries where Muslims constitute a minority. The following section will examine the enduring effects of policy and media on the perpetuation of Islamophobia.

Effects of Policy and Media on Islamophobia

Policy

The events of 9/11 have led to the enactment of legislation that has had enduring effects on Islamophobia in America (Lean, 2012; Sheehi, 2011). Acts of terrorism in America have fostered a sense of suspicion regarding Muslim people’s citizenship, identity and loyalty (Jasperse, Ward & Jose, 2012; Spalek, 2008). Muslims have become targets of anti-terrorist legislation such as the Patriot Act and counter-terrorism surveillance policing (Lean, 2012; Poynting & Mason, 2006; Sheehi, 2011). The Patriot Act, which violated the United States Bill of Rights by abridging the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, the freedom of expression and the right to due process, has impacted the lives of countless innocent Muslims in America who have been wrongfully accused of anti-Americanism (Lean, 2012; Sheehi, 2011; Nimer, 2007). One example is the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp that was established to detain war prisoners and violated the prisoners’ right to due process (Nimer, 2007; Sheehi, 2011).

Furthermore, U.S. Customs and Border Protection have increased security measures such as fingerprinting, photographing, interviewing, and body cavity searches of Muslims who are entering America; this occurs in spite of the fact that they are citizens (Esposito & Kalin, 2011; Lean, 2012; Nimer, 2007). The Transportation Security Administration was developed to monitor flight passengers, and was given the authority to place passengers on a ‘no-fly’ list,

which exclusively involved Muslim passengers (Love, 2009). Islamophobic policies have also targeted women who wear hijabs as part of their religious practices (Jasperse et al., 2012; Sway, 2005). Many countries such as France, Germany and Turkey have placed various limitations on hijabs, restricting the religious right of Muslim women to cover their heads (Ernst, 2011; Sheehi, 2011; Sway, 2005). Last, many Americans feared that Muslims were seeking to establish Islamic law, also known as Sharia law in the United States (Allen, 2010; Sheehi, 2011). In 2011, 49 bills to ban sharia law were introduced in 29 states, in large part due to the roughly 30% of Americans who feared that Muslims wanted to establish Sharia law in the United States (Marrapodi, 2011).

These policies have several consequences for Islam and Muslims. First, they institutionalize discrimination against Islam and Muslims and put them at a disadvantage; they are much like race-based policies and practices such as redlining and restricting access to employment have done for other racial minorities since the founding of the U.S (Allen, 2010; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008; Sheehi, 2011). Second, they perpetuate the fear of Muslims by singling out Muslims as potential terrorists and security threats; these policies signal that Muslims, by nature, are suspicious people and in need of surveillance by law enforcement and citizens, for the security of the nation (Allen, 2010; Ernst, 2011; Sheehi, 2011; Sway, 2005). Finally, they also serve to exclude and reinforce the status of Muslims as “others” who undermine American values and culture (Allen, 2010; Sheehi, 2011). These consequences can exacerbate the challenges that Muslims face in securing their place in the American tapestry of cultures and traditions (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). Additionally, these consequences work to further entrench Islamophobia in American discourse and politics (Allen, 2010; Sheehi, 2011).

Media

In addition to the legislation of policies that have influenced Islamophobia, the media has further perpetuated Islamophobia in America and contributed to the stereotyping of Muslims as a violent populace driven by an anti-Western agenda (Bail, 2012; Ishak & Solihin, 2012; Lean, 2012; Sheehi, 2011). The media is often used for agenda-setting and representation through its ability to influence salient issues through public discourse (Bail, 2012; Ishak & Solihin, 2012; Lean, 2012). In the Western world, media portrayals tend to associate Islam with violence, terrorism, extremism, radicalism and anti-American discourse (Ali, Liu, & Humedian, 2004; Allen, 2010; Dunn, Klocker & Salabay, 2007; Nimer, 2007; Bail, 2012; Ishak & Solihin, 2012; Jackson, 2010). According to Allen (2001), the media is the most accessible disseminator of Islamophobia in the Western world. After 9/11, anti-Islamic sentiments became popularized through various media outlets in an attempt to create a perpetual fear of Islam and Muslims in the world (Bail, 2012; Jackson, 2010; Lean, 2012).

A study by Kunst et al. (2013) found that a general fear of Islam is prevailing in the Western world, thereby providing evidence for the effectiveness of media outlets in vilifying Islam and Muslims. Their study showed that globally, individuals sustain a fear of Islamization that is positively correlated with the degree to which they are exposed to public discourses regarding Islamophobia in the media (Allen, 2001; Kunst et al., 2013). Of media, television news has played a significant role in fomenting Islamophobia. Approximately 3 of 4 network viewers stated that they rely on the news for their main source of information and 60% of network viewers expressed holding an unfavorable view of Islam that was amplified by their exposure to the media (Ishak & Solihin, 2012; Jackson, 2010; Martin & Phelan, 2002; Nimer, 2007; Lean, 2012).

Many right-wing media outlets such as ‘*Christian Broadcasting Network*,’ ‘*Fox News*,’ ‘*National Review*,’ ‘*The Mark Levin Show*,’ ‘*The Rush Limbaugh Show*,’ ‘*The Savage Nation*,’ ‘*Washington Times*,’ and ‘*WorldNet Daily*’ engage in Islamophobic discourse and are responsible for promoting negative attitudes towards Islam with their viewers (Allen, 2010; Jackson, 2010; Lean, 2012; Martin & Phelan, 2002; Nimer, 2007; Ishak & Solihin, 2012). For example, nearly three times as many Americans who watch ‘*Fox News*’ hold unfavorable attitudes of Muslims, as compared with those who watch ‘*CNN*’ (Marrapodi, 2011). However, these implications extend far beyond Muslims (Minelle, 2001). Studies have found that non-White ethnic minorities such as Africans, Asians and Latinos are often misrepresented and negatively depicted in the media (Greenberg, 2000; Jakubowicz, 2003; Minelle, 2001). Consequently, these non-White groups are perceived as being opposed to mainstream society, which leads to the dissemination of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors (Caspi & Elias, 2001; Jakubowicz, 2003).

Overall, the media has played a significant role in promoting Islamophobic perspectives, which have led to a negative perception of Muslims and Islam around the world. These negative perceptions have sustained an enduring fear of Muslims that has perpetuated prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors against them.

Perpetuating Prejudice through Fear

Fear and Prejudice

The fear of Muslims is specifically related to the idea that Muslims pose a threat to the security of nations and that they are perpetually plotting to harm innocent citizens of Western countries (Allen, 2010). Ongoing arrests of alleged terrorists who are charged with conspiring to carry out terrorist attacks, such as the six foreign-born Muslim men arrested for plotting to attack

Fort Dix in 2007, and the media hype surrounding these high profile cases have helped to cement the perception of Muslims as a global threat (Allen, 2010; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008; Sheehi, 2011).

A number of studies provide evidence of an increase in a perceived threat of Muslims in America after 9/11 (Gonzalez et al., 2008; Hitlan, Carillo, Zarate & Aikman, 2007; Woods, 2011). Likewise, a study by Johnston (2006) reported that more than half of respondents said that they feel threatened by Muslims. A study by Wike and Grim (2010) found that threat perception is an essential predictor of out-groups attitudes. The presence of threat and the fear of other cultures, religions and social groups leads to increased levels of prejudice and discrimination (Corenblum & Stephan, 2001; Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Florack et al., 2003; Legault, Green-Demers, 2012; Pettigrew et al., 2007; Riek, Mania & Gaertner, 2006). Inter-group conflict theory proposes that greater levels of perceived threat result in increased out-group hostility (Tajfel & Turner, 1979 as cited in Woods, 2011). Studies by Gonzales et al. (2008) and Hitlan et al. (2007) found that the perceived threat of Muslims was strongly related to negative stereotypes of Islam and prejudice toward Muslims. The 9/11 attacks heightened these stereotypes of Muslims and Islam and has led to an increase in discrimination against Muslims in America (Allen, 2010). The increased perception of threat toward Muslims after 9/11 has exacerbated anti-Islamic sentiments in America and facilitated the cultivation and growth of Islamophobia.

Perceived threat has an affective component consisting of concern, worry and fear, and a cognitive component consisting of beliefs surrounding danger (Woods, 2011). The events of 9/11 have resulted both in an individual and in a collective threat that Americans perceived toward their own personal wellbeing, the wellbeing of their families and friends, and to their

nation as a whole (Woods, 2011). Given that Islamophobia is defined as a fear of Muslims, the theoretical basis and assessment of Islamophobia should focus on the affective component of fear rather than broader theoretical constructs such as prejudice and discrimination (Lee et al., 2013).

Emotions have been shown to strongly influence intergroup relations; therefore, measuring the affective component of fear should help develop an understanding of people's reactions toward Muslims (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Lee et al., 2013; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). A study by Ommundsen, Yakushko, Van Der Veer and Ulleberg (2013) found that the strongest predictor of an interpersonal fear-related response was an encounter with a Muslim. Further, research has suggested that fear elicits direct avoidance and attentional biases of out-groups that are perpetuated by recurring thoughts of contempt and feelings of antipathy (Cisler, Olatunji, Lohr & Williams, 2009; Conger, Dygdon & Rollock, 2012). A study examining the relationship between intergroup disgust-sensitivity and Islamophobia found that participants who experience disgust and revulsion toward ethnic minorities displayed stronger anti-Islamic attitudes (Choma, Hodson & Costello, 2012). The study further demonstrated that the relationship between intergroup disgust sensitivity and Islamophobia was strengthened with the presence of negative emotions such as fear, anger and sadness (Choma et al., 2012). Implications of this study suggest that people who are predisposed to harboring prejudicial and fearful attitudes toward minorities will be more likely to experience Islamophobia (Choma et al., 2012).

Other factors such as race, gender, political orientation, religious orientation and interpersonal contact are common predictors of prejudice and discrimination toward opposing out-groups (Allport & Ross, 1967; Crandall, 1994; Henley & Pincus, 1978; Pettigrew & Tropp,

2006; Ponterotto et al., 1995; Rowatt et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2003). Given the fact that fear of an out-group is associated with prejudice and discrimination, measuring Islamophobia should yield a similar outcome (Soldatova, 2007; Lee et al., 2009). Despite fear being a common reaction to Muslims and the religion of Islam, there is a scarcity in empirical research examining this intergroup emotion (Bleich, 2011; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008; Poynting & Mason, 2007).

After 9/11, there has been an increased perception of threat concerning Islam in America that has contributed to a widespread and enduring fear of Muslims (Allen, 2010). The perceived threat of Muslims in America is associated with negative stereotypes of Islam that have been widely dispersed through various forms of public discourse (Allen, 2010; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). Consequently, the presence of threat and fear concerning Islam has led to increased levels of prejudice and discrimination against Muslims, which has been amply documented in research (Gonzalez et al., 2008; Hitlan, Carillo, Zarate & Aikman, 2007; Woods, 2011). Strategies for improving intergroup relations with Muslims and reducing prejudice and discrimination against Islam will be further elaborated in the subsequent section.

Intergroup Contact & Intergroup Anxiety

Intergroup Contact

One of the most effective strategies for weakening racial and religious biases is through communication with opposing out-group members (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2006). Gordon Allport (1954) proposed the contact hypothesis as a strategy for improving intergroup relations and posits the idea that the most effective way to reduce hostility, prejudice and discrimination is by increasing exposure to out-groups. Increased exposure between conflicting groups creates an opportunity for these groups to communicate with one another (Allport, 1954). Increased levels

of communication facilitate greater understanding and appreciation of one another, which ultimately ameliorates prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors (Allport, 1954; Hewstone & Brown, 1986).

In order for intergroup contact to be effective, there are several conditions that should be considered (Allport, 1954). Groups must: have equal status during the contact situation, work collectively on a common goal, have institutional support of authorities and be willing to cooperate with one another (Allport, 1954). The contact hypothesis was later extended to include four additional factors (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Individuals should have positive expectations about the potential exposure to intergroup contact; the collective goal should yield success; individuals in opposing groups should carefully consider similarities and differences amongst them, and last, members of conflicting groups should perceive one another as typical group members (Hewstone and Brown, 1986). Therefore, increasing contact with Muslims under the specific conditions outlined here should yield a reduction of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011; Islam & Hewstone, 1993).

Research on intergroup contact supports the efficacy of the contact hypothesis for reducing discrimination and prejudicial attitudes (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2006). A meta-analysis examining the effects of intergroup contact with out-groups based on race, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation by Tropp and Pettigrew (2006) evaluated 515 empirical studies with over 250,000 subjects from 38 countries and found that 94% of subjects demonstrated decreased prejudice and discrimination as a result of intergroup contact. Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) further found that intergroup contact effectively generalizes across various out-groups and has an enduring effect on positive out-group attitudes. Additionally, they found support for the secondary transfer effect that generalizes the experience of positive intergroup contact to

differing out-groups that were not initially encountered (Pettigrew, 2009; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Tausch et al., 2010; Van Laar, Levin, Sinclair & Sidanius, 2005).

Several studies have demonstrated the fact that intergroup contact fosters specific, positive attitudes and perceptions by undermining implicit stereotypes and leads to an improvement in status for out-group members (Hopkins, Greenwood & Birchall, 2007; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Turner, Crisp, & Lambert, 2007). For example, some studies demonstrated that contact with immigrants leads to an increase in perception of competence, sociability and morality (Brambilla, Hewstone & Colucci, 2013), in addition to increased cultural competence and ethnic tolerance (Kim, 2012). A study examining implicit stereotypes found that intergroup contact can lead to reduced bias and prejudice of Latino Americans (Brannon & Walton, 2013). These findings, however, were not limited to face-to-face contact; vicarious contact by subjects observing in-group members having successful out-group contact has also been shown to reduce prejudice against ethnic out-groups and to improve levels of empathy, compassion and tolerance (Brambilla, Ravenna & Hewstone, 2012; Gomez & Huici, 2008; Husnu & Crisp, 2011; Mazziotta, Mummendey & Wright, 2011; Stathi & Crisp, 2008; Stathi, Crisp & Hogg, 2011; Turner et al., 2007; Vezzali, Capozza, Giovannini & Stathi, 2012). Not only has vicarious contact been shown to be effective, but imagined contact as well. A study examining the effects of imagined intergroup contact found that participants who simply imagined a conversation with a Muslim reported favorable attitudes about Islam after the exercise (Pagotto, Visintin, Iorio & Voci, 2012). The preceding studies demonstrate that increasing contact, whether it is face-to-face, vicarious or imagined, can lead to an enhanced perception of competence of out-groups and cultivate empathy, compassion and tolerance. Contact can humanize members of out-groups by highlighting similarities between in and out-group members. In terms of Islamophobia,

intergroup contact may help challenge the negative perception of Muslims as “terrorists” who oppose Western values and ideology.

Overall, the intergroup contact hypothesis appears promising for addressing Islamophobia, in spite of the fact that Islam is the least respected religion in America (Jung, 2012). A study found that increased intergroup contact with Muslims leads to decreased levels of prejudice and more favorable attitudes about Islam (Hopkins et al., 2007). Additionally, research has suggested that participants with at least one Muslim friend tend to be less Islamophobic, compared with participants without a Muslim friend (Lee et al., 2009).

These findings highlight the importance of increasing contact between groups, and specifically between Muslim-Americans and other American citizens, to reduce feelings of fear, prejudice and discrimination. Doing so can increase positive feelings toward Muslims and lead to greater tolerance and acceptance. It can also lead to Muslims being perceived as a diverse group. However, contact alone is not sufficient for improving inter-group relations; the quality of the contact is a crucial component.

Intergroup Anxiety

Having confirmed the efficacy of intergroup contact on improving intergroup relations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), research has focused on variables affecting the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice and discrimination (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2010). One variable that has received significant attention is intergroup anxiety, which is defined as feelings of apprehension that stem from negative anticipatory consequences with out-groups (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). There are four types of negative outcomes that elicit intergroup anxiety during anticipated interactions with out-group members: negative psychological consequences such as embarrassment or criticism, negative behavioral consequences such as exploitation or

manipulation, negative evaluations such as rejection and humiliation, and negative evaluations by in-group members (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). These potential outcomes manifest feelings of threat and, ultimately, intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

Intergroup anxiety is influenced by several factors such as prior intergroup experiences, intergroup stereotypes, intergroup identity and intergroup conflict (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Stephan et al., 2002). The amount and type of contact with out-group members also impacts the intensity of intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Individuals who experience greater levels of intergroup anxiety have been shown to exhibit stronger prejudicial attitudes toward out-groups (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Corenblum & Stephan, 2001; Littleford, Wright, Sayoc-Parial, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Stephan et al., 2002).

Intergroup anxiety is a strong predictor of the outcomes of experiences with intergroup contact (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Stephan et al., 2002; Voci & Hewstone, 2003). Anticipated contact with members of out-groups has been shown to evoke greater feelings of anxiety, as compared with interactions with members of the same group (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Heightened levels of intergroup anxiety often result in exaggerated emotions, cognitions and behaviors that perpetuate negative attitudes of out-group members (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Stephan, Stephan, & Gudykunst, 1999).

Given the fact that the recent history of terrorism by Muslims has become a central part of the narrative of prior intergroup experiences, intergroup anxiety among mainstream Americans may be heightened during encounters with Muslims. This heightened intergroup anxiety can cause Americans to react to Muslims with extreme emotions such as fear and hatred, and to perceive them as suspicious. Consequently, the apprehension surrounding intergroup encounters with Muslims can lead to extreme behavior toward them such as discrimination and

hate crimes. The subsequent research details the detrimental effects of intergroup anxiety on intergroup relations, and suggests that intergroup anxiety may have a moderating effect on utilizing intergroup contact to decrease prejudice and discrimination against Muslims (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011).

Following Stephan and Stephan's (1985) theory about the effects of intergroup anxiety, several studies have demonstrated the fact that anxiety plays a significant role in intergroup relations (Dijker, 1987; Glick, DeMorest, & Hotze, 1988; Wilder, 1993). Researchers found that potential interactions with out-group members elicit various concerns for individuals; these may include the ideas that they may be perceived incompetent, exploited or ridiculed (Dijker, 1987; Glick, DeMorest, & Hotze, 1988; Wilder, 1993). These concerns arouse anxiety leading to apprehension toward out-group members (Dijker, 1987; Glick, DeMorest, & Hotze, 1988; Wilder, 1993). Research by Stephan et al. (1999) examined the antecedents and consequences of intergroup anxiety and found that anxiety elicits exaggerated responses, negative perceptions, stereotypes, and intensified emotions toward out-group members.

One factor that has been found to intensify the effect of intergroup anxiety and that is relevant to working with Muslim populations is threat perception (Kamans, Otten, & Gordijn, 2011; Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006). Studies examining the effects of threat found that perceived realistic threat and symbolic threat perpetuate intergroup anxiety, resulting in increased levels of prejudice and discrimination (Kamans et al., 2011; Riek et al., 2006). Similarly, a study by Van Zomeren, Fischer, and Spears (2007) found that intergroup anxiety elicits stronger perceptions of threat associated with out-group members, causing increased prejudice. Therefore, the perceived threat of Islam should yield an increase in prejudicial

attitudes and discriminatory behaviors toward Muslims (Gonzalez et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2007; Kamans et al., 2011; Riek, 2006).

Furthermore, the negative impact of intergroup anxiety on intergroup relations is exacerbated during interracial encounters (Plan & Devine, 2003). One study found that when individuals anticipate anxiety in interracial encounters, they tend to display greater prejudice and discrimination toward out-group members, leading to significant racial bias (Plan & Devine, 2003). A similar study by Corenblum and Stephan (2001) demonstrated that realistic and symbolic threat, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes are significant predictors of negative out-group attitudes toward ethnic minorities. Research has also found that an anticipated interracial interaction elicited greater levels of anxiety, which was significantly correlated with participants' negative implicit racial evaluations of ethnic minorities (Amodio & Hamilton, 2012).

Overall, intergroup anxiety has an enduring effect on prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors against members of out-groups. Any efforts to reduce Islamophobia, then, by facilitating contact between Muslims and non-Muslims would have to take into account the presence of intergroup anxiety and would have to include strategies to address and decrease this anxiety.

Intergroup Contact & Intergroup Anxiety

Upon understanding the consequential effects of intergroup anxiety on intergroup relationships, researchers sought to better understand the relationship between intergroup anxiety and its association with intergroup contact and prejudice and discrimination (Birtell & Crisp, 2012; Stephan et al., 2000; Turner, Hewstone, Voci & Vonofakou, 2008; Voci & Hewstone, 2003). Researchers found that decreased levels of intergroup contact are associated with

increased levels of intergroup anxiety (Brown & Hewstone, 2005). Although it is well documented that intergroup contact reduces prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors (Asbrock, Christ, Duckitt & Sibley, 2012; Cakal, Hewstone, Schwar & Heath, 2011; Cameron, Rutland, Hossain & Petley, 2011; Cernat, 2010; Collier, Bos, Theo & Sandfort, 2012; Dhont, Van Hiel, De Bolle & Roets, 2012; Glasford & Calcagno, 2012; Koschate, Hofmann & Schmitt, 2012; Migacheva & Tropp, 2013; Saguy & Dovidio, 2013; Sengupta & Sibley, 2013; Sengupta, Barlow & Sibley, 2012; Walch et al., 2012), research has shown that intergroup anxiety moderates the association between increased intergroup contact and decreased levels of prejudice and discrimination (Binder et al., 2009; Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Crowson & Brandes, 2010; Harwood et al., 2005; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Pagotto, Voci & Maculan, 2010; Paolini et al., 2004; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Turner et al., 2008; Turner, Hewstone & Voci, 2007; Voci & Hewstone, 2003). Therefore, in the presence of intergroup anxiety, intergroup contact alone will not result in a decrease in prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Islam & Hewstone, 1993). The elucidation of this relationship is critical to understanding the impact of intergroup anxiety on intergroup relations (Turner, Hewstone & Voci, 2007; Voci & Hewstone, 2003).

Researchers have attempted to illustrate the moderating effects of intergroup anxiety on the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice and discrimination toward Muslims (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011; Islam & Hewstone, 1993). Several studies have demonstrated that contact with Muslims can lead to improved attitudes about Islam and decrease both explicit and implicit prejudice toward Muslims (Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Johnson, Jasper, Griffin & Huffman, 2013; Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011; Tausch et al., 2010). However, the preceding studies found that intergroup anxiety moderated the relationship between contact with Muslims

and levels of prejudice and discrimination (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Johnson, Jasper, Griffin & Huffman, 2013; Tausch et al., 2010). Specifically, in the presence of intergroup anxiety, contact with Muslims did not yield favorable attitudes and opinions toward Islam (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Johnson, Jasper, Griffin & Huffman, 2013; Tausch et al., 2010). Despite the efficacy of contact on improving relationships, research demonstrates that anxiety can depreciate the value of its effectiveness, resulting in the hindrance of intergroup relations. Therefore, any efforts to improve intergroup relations between Muslims and other Americans by facilitating intergroup contact must take into account the presence of intergroup anxiety. In situations in which intergroup anxiety is heightened, researchers may need to include other measures to address anxiety prior to facilitating contact.

Conclusion

Islamophobia has led to increased heights of bigotry toward Muslims in America. Fear can often elicit prejudicial thoughts and discriminatory behaviors toward members of out-groups, and the pervasive fear of Islam seems to elicit such biased behavior against Muslims (Allen, 2010; Gonzalez et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2007 & Johnston, 2006)

One strategy for improving intergroup relations and decreasing prejudice and discrimination is to increase intergroup contact. Studies have found that increasing contact with Muslims can improve overall perceptions of Islam (Hopkins et al., 2007; Jung, 2012). However, intergroup anxiety can moderate the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice and discrimination, resulting in the persistence of negative out-group attitudes following intergroup contact (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Johnson et al., 2013; Tausch et al., 2010).

Previous research concerning Islam has focused on the effect of intergroup contact on reducing prejudice and discrimination toward Muslims and the moderating effect of intergroup anxiety. However, despite the fact that fear is a common reaction toward the religion of Islam, researchers have neglected to examine the impending fear of Muslims, or Islamophobia. The current study will seek to understand the relationship between intergroup contact with Muslims and Islamophobia and examine the moderating effect of intergroup anxiety. With the expanding number of Muslims in America, it is important to understand how to decrease discrimination and prejudice towards them and ultimately reduce the ubiquity of Islamophobia.

Hypotheses

The current study will examine the relationship between intergroup contact, intergroup anxiety and Islamophobia. The researcher predicts that the quantity of contact with Muslims will influence the pervasiveness of Islamophobia. Additionally, intergroup anxiety will moderate the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia. The hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: In accordance with previous research, factors such as race, religious orientation, political orientation and media exposure will be significant predictors of Islamophobia. Additionally, with consideration of research surrounding the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), it is predicted that increased levels of contact with Muslims will reduce the pervasiveness of fear in Islamophobia, but that reduced amounts of contact with Muslims will increase the prevalence of fear in Islamophobia.

Hypothesis 2: Intergroup anxiety will moderate the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia. The prevalence of intergroup anxiety will result in a greater level of fear in Islamophobia despite the increased quantity of contact with Muslims, but the absence of intergroup anxiety will reduce the pervasiveness of fear in Islamophobia.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Design

The present study implemented a within-groups prospective correlational design to evaluate the relationship between intergroup contact, intergroup anxiety and Islamophobia. The goal of the study was to examine intergroup contact as a predictor of Islamophobia and to evaluate the moderating effect of intergroup anxiety on the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia. In the current study, Islamophobia was the dependent variable and intergroup contact and intergroup anxiety were the independent variables. A revised version of the Perceived Islamophobia Scale (PIS) (Kunst et al., 2013), the Intergroup Contact Measure (ICM) (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011) and the Intergroup Anxiety (IA) (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011) measure were administered to gather data necessary to examine the relationship between the variables being studied for this research.

Participants

The participants in the present study were community members of liberal and of conservative forums (N = 214; 162 men and 52 women) ranging from 15 to 72 years of age. In regard to the participants' races, approximately 79% were White (n = 168); 3% were Hispanic or Latino (n = 7); 4% were Black or African American (n = 9); 2% were Native American or American Indian (n = 3); 9% were Asian/Pacific Islander (n = 20), and 3% indicated a different race (n = 7). For the purpose of data analysis, the data were collapsed and dichotomized as White and Other. In regard to the participants' religious orientations, approximately 43% were Christian (n = 93); 4% were Jewish (n = 8); 6% were Muslim (n = 12); 35% were Agnostic or Atheist (n = 75), and 12% indicated a different religious orientation (n = 26). For the purpose of

data analysis, the data were collapsed and dichotomized as Christian and Other. In regard to the participants' political orientations, approximately 25% were Republican (n = 53); 37% were Democrat (n = 80); 15% were Libertarian (n = 31), and 23% indicated a different political orientation (n = 50). For the purpose of data analysis, the data were collapsed and dichotomized as Republican and Other. In regard to the participants' main source for news, 20% indicated Fox News (n = 42); 16% indicated CNN (n = 35), and 64% indicated a different source of news (i.e. MSNBC) (n = 137). For the purpose of data analysis, the data were collapsed and dichotomized as Fox News and Other.

The only criterion that the participants had to meet to be eligible for this study was to be active community members of various liberal or conservative forums. However, Muslim participants were excluded from the study because they would most likely not be Islamophobic. The participants were not compensated for participating in the study, and participation was voluntary. Of the 214 participants, only 195 fully completed the measures. The partial data for the other 19 participants were removed using the listwise deletion method. Additionally, 12 participants identified themselves to be Muslim and were excluded, leaving a total of 183 participants in the data analysis.

Measures

Demographics.

A general demographic form (See Appendix B) developed by the researcher was administered to gather a participant's gender, age, ethnicity, and religious and political affiliation. Data gathered in the study remained anonymous so the names of the participants were not retrieved.

Perceived Islamophobia Scale.

The revised version of the PIS, is a 12-item questionnaire that measures Islamophobia. (Kunst et al., 2013). Factor analysis identified a three factor model of the PIS (Kunst et al., 2013). The first subscale measures the general fear of Islam (Kunst et al., 2013). Items include statements such as, “I am afraid of Islam,” and “I feel safe among Muslims.” (Kunst et al., 2013). The second subscale measures a fear of Islamization (Kunst et al., 2013). Items include statements such as, “I’m afraid that Muslims are going to take over America,” and “I fear an Islamization of America” (Kunst et al., 2013). The third subscale measures Islamophobia in the media (Kunst et al., 2013). Items include statements such as, “American media presents Muslims as dangerous people,” and “America media spreads a lot of fear of Muslims and Islam” (Kunst et al., 2013). The items on the PIS were answered using a Likert scale which consisted of 6 possible responses ranging from ‘1-totally disagree’ to ‘6-totally agree’ (Kunst et al., 2013). Scores on the PIS range from 12 to 72 with a higher score indicating greater levels of Islamophobia. Reliability analyses of the three subscales showed satisfactory reliability coefficients with an alpha of .81 for the general fear subscale, .85 for the fear of Islamization subscale and a .86 for the Islamophobia in the media subscale (Kunst et al., 2013). Additionally, the PIS found support for construct, criterion and convergent validity (Kunst et al., 2013).

Intergroup Contact Measure.

The revised version of the ICM (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011) is a 2-item questionnaire that assesses both the quantity of contact with Muslims and the quality of contact with Muslims (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). Contact quantity was measured by the following item, “On average, how much contact do you have with Muslims?” (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). This item was answered on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (very little) to 5 (very much) (Hutchison &

Rosenthal, 2011). Contact quality was measured by the following item, “Rate the quality of contact you have with Muslims.” (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). This item was answered on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good) (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). A single intergroup contact score was calculated by adding the response for contact quantity and contact quality (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). A higher intergroup contact score indicated a higher frequency of high-quality contact with Muslims (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). Reliability of this measure was unpublished and therefore, unattainable.

Intergroup Anxiety.

The IA (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011) is a 4-item questionnaire that assesses an individual’s anxiety level during social interactions with Muslims (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). The items on the measure include, “I feel anxious when I come into contact with Muslims,” “I feel nervous when I come into contact with Muslims,” “I feel relaxed when I come into contact with Muslims,” and “I feel threatened when I come into contact with Muslims” (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). The items on the IA were answered using a Likert scale which consisted of 5 possible responses ranging from, ‘1-strongly disagree’ to ‘5-strongly agree’ (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). The four items were combined to form an intergroup anxiety score (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). A higher score indicated a greater level of anxiety surrounding contact with Muslims (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). Information regarding the reliability of the IA was inaccessible.

Procedure

A link to participate in the study was posted on various conservative and liberal forums. The study was implemented through Survey Monkey, an online survey software & questionnaire tool that improves the efficiency of the data collection process. The measures were uploaded onto Survey Monkey and participants that consented to participate in the study were provided with directions on how to complete the measures. The order of the measures was counterbalanced to account for order effects. In order to account for social desirability effects, participants were debriefed regarding the purpose of the study upon completion of the measures. Additionally, they were notified that the study was completely anonymous and voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at their discretion. Following data collection, statistical analysis of the data was conducted, using SPSS. The researcher administered all aspects of the study.

Chapter Four

Results

Hypothesis One

In order to examine if intergroup contact is a significant predictor of Islamophobia, a hierarchical regression was computed, utilizing SPSS. Before computing a hierarchical regression, tests to see if the data met the assumptions of normal distribution, linearity, independence of error and homoscedasticity were conducted. The histogram of standardized residuals indicated that the data contained approximately normally distributed errors, as did the normal P-P plot of standardized residuals, which showed that points were completely on the line. Both collinearity and independent errors assumptions were met, as evidenced by VIF values (Race = 1.02; Religious Orientation = 1.13; Political Orientation = 1.19; Media Exposure = 1.17; Intergroup Contact = 1.02), and a Durbin Watson value of 2.01, respectively. Last, the scatterplot of standardized predicted values showed that the data met the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and linearity. Additionally, the data met the assumption of non-zero variances. In the analysis for this study, the predictor variables were intergroup contact as well as race, religious orientation, political orientation and media exposure. The outcome variable was Islamophobia. See table 1 for variable descriptions, and table 2 for descriptive statistics.

Table 1

Variable Descriptions

Variable	Variable Description
Islamophobia	
Intergroup Anxiety	
Intergroup Contact	
Race	0 = Other, 1 = White
Religious Orientation	0 = Other, 1 = Christian
Political Orientation	0 = Other, 1 = Republican
Media Exposure	0 = Other, 1 = Fox News

Race was coded as 1 if the participant was White, and 0 if he or she identified as a different race. Religious Orientation was coded 1 if the participant was Christian and 0 if he or she identified with a different religious orientation. Political Orientation was coded 1 if the participant was Republican and 0 if he or she identified with a different political orientation. Media Exposure was coded 1 if the participant's main source for news was Fox News and 0 if he or she relied on a different source for news. The dependent variable in this model is Islamophobia. A hierarchical regression with two models was computed to understand the relationships between the predictor variables and the criterion variable. The hierarchical regression results are presented in table 3 and table 4.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	N	M	SD
Islamophobia	183	37.25	6.08
Race	183	.95	.93
Religious Orientation	183	.40	.49
Political Orientation	183	.17	.38
Media Exposure	183	.12	.33
Intergroup Contact	183	6.91	1.78

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Results – Model 1

	B	Std. Error	β	t	p
Constant	36.586	.739		49.477	.000
Race	-.492	.466	-.076	-1.057	.292
Religious Orientation	.559	.928	.045	.603	.547
Political Orientation	2.7	1.245	.167	2.169	.031*
Media Exposure	3.739	1.423	.201	2.627	.009*

Notes: *Indicates that the coefficient is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression Results – Model 2

	B	Std. Error	β	t	p
Constant	41.072	1.846		22.252	.000
Race	-.548	.459	-.084	-1.194	.234
Religious Orientation	.588	.913	.048	.644	.520
Political Orientation	2.471	1.227	.153	2.014	.046*
Media Exposure	3.494	1.403	.187	2.490	.014*
Intergroup Contact	-.633	.239	-.186	-2.644	.009*

Notes: *Indicates that the coefficient is statistically significant at the .05 level.

The results of the hierarchical regression indicated that both *Model 1* and *Model 2* are statistically significant (*Model 1*: $F = 5.34$, $p = .00$; *Model 2*: $F = 5.81$, $p = .00$). Consistent with previous research (Allen, 2010; Chahuan, 2005; Jackson, 2010; Lean, 2012; Lee et al., 2009; Martin & Phelan, 2002; Nimer, 2007; Ishak & Solihin, 2012; Wang et al., 2003), results suggested that race, religious orientation, political orientation, and media exposure are significant predictors of Islamophobia. In this study, political orientation and media exposure were significant predictors of Islamophobia. Results indicated that Republicans (*Model 1*: $p < .04$, $B = 2.7$; *Model 2*: $p < .05$, $B = 2.47$) tend to be more Islamophobic than Democrats and Libertarians. Additionally, results suggested that participants who rely on Fox News (*Model 1*: $p < .01$, $B = 3.74$; *Model 2*: $p < .02$, $B = 3.49$) for their main source of news tend to be more Islamophobic, as compared with those who rely on CNN, MSNBC and other news sources. Moreover, a statistical analysis of race and religious orientation indicated that they are not significant predictors of Islamophobia. Thus, any related subsequent discussion is limited. Overall, *Model 1* indicated that approximately 9% of the total variability in Islamophobia can be

explained by race, religious orientation, political orientation and media exposure (Adjusted R Square = .09).

While controlling for race, religious orientation, political orientation, and media exposure as predictors of Islamophobia, results of *Model 2* indicated that the predictability of Islamophobia is significantly influenced by intergroup contact ($p < .01$, $B = -.63$). Results suggested that as contact with Muslims increases, Islamophobia decreases. With intergroup contact accounted for, *Model 2* suggested that approximately 12% of the total variability in Islamophobia can be explained by race, religious orientation, political orientation, media exposure, and intergroup contact (Adjusted R Square = .12).

Hypothesis Two

In order to examine if intergroup anxiety moderates the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia, a moderation analysis was computed, utilizing SPSS. Before computing a moderation analysis, tests to see if the data met the assumptions of normal distribution, linearity, independence of error and homoscedasticity were conducted. The histogram of standardized residuals indicated that the data contained approximately normally distributed errors, as did the normal P-P plot of standardized residuals, which showed that points were completely on the line. Both collinearity and independent errors assumptions were met, as evidenced by VIF values (Intergroup Anxiety = 1.25; Intergroup Contact = 1.15; moderator = 1.29), and a Durbin Watson value of 2.14, respectively. Last, the scatterplot of standardized predicted values showed that the data met the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and linearity. Additionally, the data met the assumption of non-zero variances. After centering intergroup contact and intergroup anxiety, and computing the intergroup contact-by-intergroup anxiety interaction term (moderator), the two predictors and the interaction were entered into a

simultaneous regression model to predict Islamophobia. See table 5 for descriptive statistics, and table 6 for results of the moderation analysis.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics

	N	M	SD
Islamophobia	183	37.25	6.08
Intergroup Anxiety	183	.2343	4.89
Intergroup Contact	183	-.1474	1.78
Moderator	183	-2.39	11.76

Table 6

Moderation Analysis Results

	B	Std. Error	β	t	p
Constant	37.018	.378		97.901	.000
Intergroup Anxiety	.673	.085	.542	7.928	.000*
Intergroup Contact	-.188	.223	-.055	-.843	.400
Moderator	-.020	.036	-.038	-.552	.582

Notes: *Indicates that the coefficient is statistically significant at the .05 level.

The results indicated that intergroup anxiety does not moderate the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia. However, intergroup anxiety alone was found to be a statistically significant predictor of Islamophobia ($p < .01$, $B = .67$). Results determined that participants who experienced intergroup anxiety were more likely to be Islamophobic. Overall, intergroup contact, intergroup anxiety, and the moderator had a statistically significant impact on Islamophobia, with the effect size accounting for approximately 32% of the variance in the model (Adjusted R Square = .32). Last, slopes for the association between intergroup contact and Islamophobia were tested for low and high levels of intergroup anxiety. Results indicated that intergroup contact is positively related to Islamophobia for low and high levels of intergroup anxiety (low p-value = .48, high p-value = .34).

Effect of 9/11

In order to examine if the events of 9/11 influence Islamophobia, a linear regression was computed, utilizing SPSS. The data were tested for assumptions of normal distribution, linearity, independence of error and homoscedasticity, and all of the criteria were met. In the analysis for this study, the independent variable was 9/11, and the dependent variable was Islamophobia. The results in this study determined that 9/11 is not a significant predictor of Islamophobia ($p > .05$). Results indicated that participants who were personally affected by the events of 9/11 did not demonstrate greater levels of Islamophobia, than participants who were not personally affected. See table 7 for descriptive statistics, and table 8 for results of the linear regression.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics

	N	M	SD
Islamophobia	183	37.25	6.08
9/11	183	1.66	.475

Table 8

Linear Regression Results

	B	Std. Error	β	t	p
Constant	38.970	1.639		23.770	.000
9/11	-1.035	.949	-.081	-1.090	.277

Chapter Five

Discussion

Implications

The results of this study indicate that Islamophobia is influenced by the amount of contact participants have with Muslims. Results suggest that as contact with Muslims increases, Islamophobia decreases. This finding is critical in promoting effective strategies to decrease the prevailing fear of Muslims in America. One of the most effective strategies for weakening racial and religious biases is through communication with Muslims (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2006). Therefore, psychologists can focus on creating opportunities to interact with Muslims in order to attenuate the degree of Islamophobia that continues to rise. Gordon Allport (1954) proposed the contact hypothesis as a strategy for improving intergroup relations and posits the idea that the most effective way to reduce hostility, prejudice and discrimination is by increasing exposure to out-groups. If psychologists are able to increase exposure between outgroup members and Muslims, this will create an opportunity for the groups to communicate with one another. Increased levels of communication facilitate greater understanding and appreciation of one another, which ultimately ameliorates prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors (Allport, 1954; Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Increased contact with Muslims can potentially improve relations with Muslims, and ultimately decrease the pervasiveness of Islamophobia. However, considering the confirmation bias, those who have negative entrenched beliefs about Islam may not be as susceptible to change through contact with Muslims. This is likely due to the inclination to interpret experiences in a manner that confirms preexisting beliefs (Nickerson, 1998).

Furthermore, political orientation and media exposure were also found to be significant predictors of Islamophobia. Results indicate that Republicans tend to be more Islamophobic than Democrats and Libertarians. Additionally, results suggest that participants who rely on Fox News for their main source of news tend to be more Islamophobic, as compared with those who rely on CNN or MSNBC for their main source of news. Interestingly enough, Fox News is a conservative right-wing media outlet that holds views similar to those of conservative Republicans (Ishak & Solihin, 2012; Marrapodi, 2011). These findings begin to elucidate the possibility that Islamophobia is a socially constructed phenomenon exacerbated by media and politics. To further support this notion, a statistical analysis of race and religious orientation indicated that they are not significant predictors of Islamophobia. These findings indicate that race and religion do not exacerbate Islamophobia as do media exposure and politics.

The results of this study further indicate that intergroup anxiety does not moderate the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia. Because this hypothesis is disconfirmed, the data further demonstrate the predictability effect of intergroup contact on Islamophobia. However, intergroup anxiety alone was found to be a statistically significant predictor of Islamophobia. Results determined that participants who experienced intergroup anxiety were more likely to be Islamophobic. These findings help to identify an additional predictor of Islamophobia, along with intergroup contact, political orientation and media exposure. Therefore, psychologists can focus on factors that elicit anxiety toward Muslims, and devise strategies to alleviate intergroup anxiety in hopes of decreasing Islamophobia and the prevailing discrimination and prejudice that accompany it.

Moreover, results of this study indicate that participants ($n = 62$) who were personally affected by the events of 9/11 did not endorse greater levels of Islamophobia. Despite previous

research indicating that the events of 9/11 have exacerbated Islamophobia in America (Allen, 2010; Lee et al., 2013; Woods, 2011), the findings in this study suggest that the events of 9/11 are not predictive of Islamophobia. Therefore, it is likely that the accounts of Islamophobia found in this study could be a result of more recent terrorist attacks that have occurred in America and abroad.

Overall, this study helps improve the understanding of the relationships among variables involved in sustaining the pervasiveness of Islamophobia, which is a growing concern in America (Allen, 2011; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). By elucidating the reasons why the prevailing fear of Muslims exists (Gonzalez et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2007; Woods, 2011), psychologists can focus on strategies that can help reduce the prevalence of Islamophobia in America. Specifically, researchers can create strategies that focus on factors such as intergroup contact, intergroup anxiety, political orientation and media exposure, all of which have been shown to exacerbate Islamophobia in this study.

Limitations

There are some limitations of this study that could pose a potential threat to validity. First, the study utilizes a sample recruited from community members of conservative and of liberal forums. Participants in these forums are likely to hold opposing views about Islam based on their right-wing and left-wing views. Therefore, the results may not be generalized to the population, given the political affiliations of the participants. Perhaps, a politically neutral set of participants may have yielded different results.

Next, the study utilizes a small sample of participants which may not be reflective of the general population. A larger sample size may have further elucidated the degree of Islamophobia that exists. Also, the majority of participants in this study were White. Although

race was not a significant predictor of Islamophobia in this study, the results appear to be limited, given the fact that there was not an equal representation of race in this study. Having an equally diverse sample size would have strengthened the findings of this study. Similarly, the majority of participants in this study were male. Although gender was not analyzed as a significant predictor of Islamophobia, an equal representation of males and females in this study could very well have influenced the results and possibly have provided greater insight into the prevalence of Islamophobia in America. Moreover, this study failed to examine the geographic region of the participants. In doing so, the results may have shed light on the prevalence of Islamophobia that exists across various geographic regions in America.

Furthermore, this study utilized self-report measures to analyze explicit attitudes toward Muslims. Consequently, participants may not have answered the questions in an accurate manner either by tempering or by exaggerating their feelings toward Muslims. Therefore, results may be reflective only of overt behaviors directed toward Muslims, but not impetuous ones that can be inherently prejudicial. As a result, the findings of this study are limited in their ability to shed light on the likelihood of implicit attitudes that perpetuate discrimination toward Muslims in America. Also, considering self-selection bias in survey research (Field, 2013), it is important to note that respondents who hold negative beliefs about Islam, may have been more highly inclined to participate in the study. Therefore, the resulting data may be biased, and not representative of the general population.

Future Research

In future research, the model tested in this study should be tested with a larger and a more diverse sample size in regard to race and gender. A larger sample size may help to further elucidate the ubiquity of Islamophobia in America. Similarly, an equally diverse sample size can

help to identify which racial groups may hold stronger feelings of Islamophobia, and whether or not gender is a significant predictor of Islamophobia. Furthermore, utilizing participants that are a reflection of the general population rather than community members of conservative and liberal forums may provide more accurate insights into attitudes that exist toward Muslims and beliefs that prevail about Islam. Also, an examination of age may provide further insight into the prevalence of Islamophobia amongst various age groups. Additionally, examining the geographic region of the participants may shed light on the prevalence of Islamophobia that exists across various geographic regions in America. Moreover, future research can focus on further elucidating the effect of the various factors that have been shown to influence Islamophobia in this study such as intergroup contact, intergroup anxiety, political orientation and media exposure, as well as examining approaches that could potentially reduce the adverse effect of those factors.

Furthermore, Islamophobia has been a controversial term relative to its meaning (Allen, 2010; Bleich, 2011). Researchers in the past have operationally defined Islamophobia either as negative attitudes toward Muslims (Bleich, 2011), or as prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors toward Muslims (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011), and even as a fear of Muslims (Lee et al., 2009). The diversity and fluidity of its meaning has allowed it to be used in various forms of scientific research (Lee, Gibbons, Thompson & Timani, 2009). Therefore, future research could use this model to predict general attitudes and beliefs about Islam that may be more common than feelings of Islamophobia, given the ambiguity of the term. Also, this model can be used to evaluate discrimination toward Muslims.

Similarly, future research may include testing this model, utilizing qualitative research as opposed to using solely self-report scales and questionnaires. Qualitative research could assist in

developing an enhanced understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations surrounding the prevailing trends in thought and opinion regarding Islamophobia in America.

Additionally, this study measured explicit attitudes toward Islam, which may be reflective only of overt behaviors directed toward Muslims, but not impetuous ones that can be inherently prejudicial. Consequently, the findings of this study are limited in their ability to shed light on the likelihood of implicit attitudes that perpetuate discrimination toward Muslims. Park et al. (2007) conducted a study examining the strength of implicit attitudes toward Arab Muslims, utilizing an Implicit Association Test (IAT). Their results indicated that participants had a preference for Whites and Blacks over Arab Muslims (Park et al., 2007). Considering these findings, and the findings of this study, future research could focus on evaluating implicit attitudes toward Islam, examining the influence of intergroup contact with Muslims, as this relates to implicit attitudes that perpetuate negative stereotypes of Islam and prejudice and discrimination toward Muslims.

Last, because research has shown the efficacy of vicarious contact and imagined contact on reducing prejudice toward out-groups (Brambilla et al., 2012; Ravenna & Hewstone, 2012; Gomez & Huici, 2008; Pagotto et al., 2012), future research could focus on the influence both of vicarious and of imagined contact on Islamophobia.

Conclusion

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 have led to feelings of disdain against Islam and have perpetuated Islamophobia in America (Allen, 2011). Consequently, Muslims have been forced to endure numerous consequences such as violence, physical and verbal abuse, and vandalism of Islamic institutions, institutionalized discrimination, and overt prejudice (Allen, 2010; Hall, 2004; Laird et al., 2007; Sway, 2005). Islamophobia has become a growing concern for Muslims

in America (Allen, 2011). Research suggests that intergroup contact can help improve intergroup relations and reduce both prejudice and discrimination against members of out-groups (Allport, 1954; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2006). This study aimed to examine if intergroup anxiety moderates the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia, and if race, religious orientation, political orientation, and media exposure are significant predictors of Islamophobia. Research has shown that intergroup anxiety has been associated with increased negative attitudes toward Muslims but reduced levels of intergroup anxiety lead to increased intergroup contact with Muslims and improved out-group attitudes (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2010; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2006).

The results of this study indicate that Islamophobia is influenced by the amount of contact that participants have with Muslims. Results suggest that as contact with Muslims increases, Islamophobia decreases. Furthermore, political orientation and media exposure were also found to be significant predictors of Islamophobia. Results indicate that Republicans tend to be more Islamophobic than Democrats and Libertarians. Additionally, results suggest that participants who rely on CNN or a different news source for their main source of news tend to be less Islamophobic, as compared with those who rely on Fox News as their main source of news. Furthermore, results indicated that intergroup anxiety does not moderate the relationship between intergroup contact and Islamophobia. However, intergroup anxiety alone was found to be a statistically significant predictor of Islamophobia. Results determined that participants who experienced intergroup anxiety were more likely to be Islamophobic. The findings of this study may serve to stimulate research on Islamophobia and address the various components that influence it, and then devise effective strategies to ameliorate it.

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Appendix A**Data Collection Websites**

1. <http://www.conservativesforum.com/>
2. <http://conservativepoliticalforum.com/>
3. <http://conservativecave.com>
4. <http://www.conservativeunderground.com>
5. <http://www.rightnation.us>
6. <http://conserpiracy.boards.net>
7. <http://www.democratichub.com>
8. <http://www.democraticunderground.com/>
9. <http://www.liberalforum.org/>
10. <http://liberalforum.net/>
11. <http://progressivesonline.com>
12. <http://Reddit.com>

Appendix B**Demographic Questionnaire**

1. What is your age? Please specify.
2. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. How would you describe your ethnic origin (or Race)?
 - a. White
 - b. Hispanic or Latino
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Native American or American Indian
 - e. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - f. Other
4. How would you describe your religious affiliation?
 - a. Christian
 - b. Jewish
 - c. Muslim
 - d. Agnostic/Atheist
 - e. Other
5. How would you describe your political affiliation?
 - a. Republican
 - b. Democrat
 - c. Libertarian
 - d. Other
6. What is your main source for receiving news?
 - a. Fox News
 - b. CNN
 - c. Other, please specify.
7. Were you, or anyone you know personally affected by the events of 9/11?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No