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## The Lived Experiences of Muslim Americans Regarding Prejudice and Discrimination by Non-Muslims

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Munder Abderrazzaq

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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

The Lived Experiences of Muslim Americans Regarding Prejudice and Discrimination by  
Non-Muslims

by

Munder Abderrazzaq

MS, Walden University, 2015

BA, Cleveland State University, 2014

BS, Cleveland State University, 2014

AA, Cuyahoga Community College, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Social Psychology

Walden University

February 2021

## Abstract

Opposition to Muslim Americans in the United States is openly expressed by majority members, which includes profiling and a recent presidential campaign proposing a “ban on Muslims.” There is a lack of qualitative studies in the United States that explore minorities’ point of view of about the tolerance displayed by majority members.

Tolerance involves a degree of restraint about the disapproval and dislike of others of different religious, racial, political, and cultural backgrounds. This limits the ability to develop and implement appropriate policies that are needed to promote positive social change. In this phenomenological study, semistructured interviews were used to explore the lived experiences of 10 Palestinian Muslim Americans from Cleveland, Ohio, about the prejudice and discrimination they have experienced by non-Muslims. Impression management theory and the theory of planned behavior constituted the theoretical framework for this study. Purposeful and convenience sampling were used to recruit 10 participants. Data analysis used Giorgi’s psychological phenomenological method, template analysis, and coding of emerging thematic categories. Findings revealed that the participants experienced prejudice and discrimination “anywhere” and “everywhere” by non-Muslims. These included verbal attacks and being treated differently, resulting in emotional distress. The tolerance between Muslims and non-Muslims was described as “good and bad” or “it depends.” Findings from this study may help in the development and implementation of social strategies that can promote positive social change among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this research to all those out there who feel defeated, lost or forgotten by their society. To the children of the world who find themselves without shelter, food, medicine, and feel abandoned and neglected, keep fighting! “When my mother and father forsake me, the Lord shall take care of me.” You will find people along the way who will help carry you when you are weak, guide you when you are lost, and believe in you when others do not. Sometimes a person has to stand alone, that is how heroes are made! Never give up!

To my twin brother who is no longer with me and looking over me in heaven, thank you for being my angel and helping me through this journey we call life. Your spirit will always be with me, I love you and think of you always. To my little sister who passed away during this research, I love you and will always remember you, God Bless.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this phenomenological study, I explored the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans, about the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims in the United States. Based on their color, ethnicity, and religion, Muslims Americans experience physical threats, verbal abuse, and racial profiling (Zainiddinov, 2016). Lived experiences such as these may have negative personal and social consequences for Muslim Americans in the United States. The exclusion of Muslim Americans from membership in society or social citizenship is based on the negative association perceived by non-Muslims about Muslim identity (Selod, 2014).

Factors such as these can motivate unfavorable behavior towards Muslim Americans in the United States, as well as the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims. Muslim Americans have experienced harassment on college campuses, the defacing and vandalism of mosques, and racial profiling in airports and communities (Samari, 2016). Recent research literature indicates a need for further research about the tolerance displayed by majority members from the point of view of minorities in the United States (Simon et al., 2018). Muslim Americans have been attacked by fellow Americans as a result of the belief that they are a group posing a threat to American society, resulting in Muslim Americans being treated as unworthy of the universal protections given to American citizens (Selod, 2014).

The results of this research may reveal motivating factors that can be used in developing and promoting positive social change among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States. The social pressures experienced by Muslim Americans involving

institutional discrimination, surveillance, and hate crimes, demonstrate the need for understanding the lived experiences of this population (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). This chapter discusses the following topics: background about the lived experiences of Muslims Americans, problem, purpose, research questions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, scope, significance, definition of key terms, theoretical framework of the study, and design.

### **Background**

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001 and the increased focus on the “war on terror,” many Muslim Americans have experienced prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, and stigmatization (Amer & Bagasra, 2013; Khan, 2014; Lamont & Collet, 2013; McDowell-Smith, 2013; Mohibullah & Kramer, 2016; Rosenthal et al., 2015; Zainiddinov, 2016). Talaska et al. (2013) described *emotional* prejudices as people’s differentiated emotions toward outgroup members, while discrimination is referred to as biased behavior toward outgroup members. According to Zainiddinov (2016), compared to other major religious and racial groups in the United States, Muslim Americans are more likely to experience discrimination. Concern over the integration of Muslim populations in the United States has continued to grow over the years since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks (Rosenthal et al., 2015).

As concern about Muslims migrating and integrating into American society increased, the mass media’s subsequent representation of this population as “terrorists” also increased. Acts of terrorism perpetrated by Muslim American terrorists has led to many Muslim Americans being falsely accused of being sympathetic to terrorism

(McDowell-Smith, 2013). Many non-Muslims associate Muslims and Islam with violence and show their support for harsh civil restrictions for Muslims (Saleem et al., 2017). While people may be unable to look past their disapproval of religious or political outgroup members and change their perceptions of outgroup members' different ways of life, they may be willing to show their respect for outgroup members as equal citizens (Simon et al., 2018).

One of the most visible forms of religious expression by Muslim women is wearing the traditional head covering (Ali et al., 2015). The American media often portrays veiled Muslim women as oppressed and raises concerns about the need to liberate them from their male-dominated cultures (Mohibullah & Kramer, 2016). Contrary to the popular beliefs and portrayals, Mohibullah and Kramer (2016) found that veiling conveys various meanings, ideals, and desires that are not determined by the Islamic practice alone. Due to stereotypes and negative portrayals of Muslim women, many Muslim women have reported experiencing prejudice and discrimination, which has led some to remove their hijab (Ali et al., 2015).

A study by Zainiddinov (2016) found that, compared to men, Muslim American women are less likely to report several types of discrimination; White Muslim men are more likely to report that they experienced discrimination compared to White, Black, and Asian women. Studies investigating racial bias confirmed that stereotypes and other beliefs explain and validate discrimination, as well as indicating that emotional prejudices have become more direct predictors of discrimination (Talaska et al., 2013). According to

Zainiddinov (2016), Muslim Americans also experience discrimination based on their race and ethnicity.

Selod (2014) discovered that identifying as a Muslim has become racialized, which is based on participants reporting fellow citizens questioning them about their nationality and loyalty to the United States once they identified themselves as a Muslim. Muslim Americans represent an ethnically and racially diverse community that is bound by shared religious tradition, similar to culture and ethnicity showing differences in health. Religion can also be an important determinant of health outcomes (Padela & Zaidi, 2018). Research has shown the rise of Islamophobia has brought on negative health outcomes and health disparities among Muslim Americans (Samari, 2016). Reported incidences of Muslim Americans being harassed on college campuses, Muslim charities having their assets frozen, mosques being defaced and vandalized, and racial profiling at airports and on the streets can contribute to the negative health outcomes for Muslim Americans, while also alienating them from the health system (Samari, 2016).

The conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States is constantly plagued with violence, which is often associated with Muslim terrorist activities. According to McDowell-Smith (2013), in order to resolve this intergroup conflict, intergroup forgiveness and empathy are needed. van Doorn (2014) described tolerance as accepting things that an individual disapproves of, disagrees with, or dislikes; although tolerance is viewed as a flawed virtue, it “may be the only thing that stands between peaceful coexistence and violent intergroup conflict” (p. 1).



Emphasizing the role of empathy, especially in terms of forgiving members who identify with an offending group, could mitigate the intergroup conflict among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States (McDowell-Smith, 2013). According to Choma et al. (2018), while terrorism and collective tragedies have negative consequences on people's well-being, there is some research showing that the personal consequences of terrorism for people's well-being does lessen with time. Also, a study conducted by Simon et al. (2018) has shown that respect for disapproved outgroup members increased tolerance towards them.

Social psychological research has indicated that multiple social categorization—“any intergroup context that involves perceiving more than a single basis for social classification”—can help change people's perceptions and judgements of outgroups (Canan & Foroutan, 2016, p. 1906). Also, current research (i.e., Vedder et al., 2017) found that lower intergroup anxiety helps to explain the association between more positive evaluations and contact with Muslims (as cited by Choma et al., 2018). Encouraging polyculturalism was found to be associated with fewer negative evaluations and behavioral intentions toward Muslim Americans (Rosenthal et al., 2015). Rosenthal et al. (2015) defined polyculturalism as “the belief that different racial and ethnic groups interact and influence each other's cultures” (p. 543). To promote friendly intergroup relationships, intergroup trust—“a sureness that an outgroup has positive intentions and behaves benevolently”—is needed (Choma et al., 2018, p. 67).

A study by Lamont and Collet (2013) demonstrated the merger between Western and Islamic values, showing that while there are challenges in resolving Islamic practices

within United States democracy, both processes are flexible enough that they can and should be modified and questioned in a way that best represents American society.

According to Ellis and Abdi (2017), research has shown that “social connection is at the heart of resilient communities; any strategy to increase community resilience must both harness and enhance existing social connections and endeavor to not damage or diminish them” (p. 289). Building community resilience through social connections and genuine partnerships can also help contribute to preventing support for foreign terrorist organizations and violent extremism (Ellis & Abdi, 2017).

Research that explores the lived experiences of Muslim Americans is greatly needed (Khan, 2014); it can promote a better understanding of how certain events, situations, or behaviors can influence the lived experiences and perceptions of this population. Researchers are encouraged to clarify Muslim subgroups that will be studied in future research (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). According to Amer and Bagasra (2013), a limited amount of research that concentrates on only a few Muslim subgroups can actually pose a risk of spreading simple-minded generalizations and stereotypes about the whole Muslim community.

The need for qualitatively exploring the tolerance between ingroup/majority members (non-Muslims) and outgroup/minority members (Muslims) in the United States was addressed in this study; most studies examining tolerance between groups were conducted using quantitative approaches and most studies on Muslims were done in European countries. According to Simon et al. (2018), the evidence about tolerance between ingroups and outgroups “remains limited to tolerance displayed by minority

members. The outgroup respect-tolerance hypothesis has indeed not been tested so far with regard to tolerance displayed by majority members toward minorities” (p. 2). van Doorn (2014) argued that (a) research on tolerance from an *interdisciplinary approach* would be beneficial, and that (b) research on tolerance from an *intergroup relations perspective* would enhance understanding about the nature of tolerance and the social situations it emerges from.

### **Problem Statement**

According to the Pew Research Center (2017), there are about 3.45 million Muslims living in the United States, a number that is expected to reach 8.1 million by 2050 (as cited by Mohamed, 2018). The discriminatory actions of non-Muslims have led to the denial of employment and the profiling of Muslim Americans, as well as those who are perceived as being Muslim (Samari, 2016). These types of experiences have been well-documented by existing literature, which describes Muslims of different ethnic and racial backgrounds becoming common targets of discrimination (Zainiddinov, 2016). Discrimination can affect the health of members of this population by increasing stress, physiological processes, risk factors and by reducing access to resources, participation in health care, and health-promoting behaviors (Samari, 2016). According to the Pew Research Center (2017), 75% of Muslim American adults believed that there is “a lot” of discrimination towards Muslims in the United States; with 50% of Muslim Americans stating an increase about the difficulty of being a Muslim in the United States (as cited by Kishi, 2017).

Prejudice is described as a negative emotional reaction towards individuals and social groups as a whole; while discrimination is described as an action that is motivated by the prejudice that people hold towards others, denying people the equal treatment they desire (Fiske, 2019). Tolerance is described as an acceptance and permission to perform practices towards people who are strongly disapproved of by others (Simon et al, 2018). Tolerance can limit the ability to discover new information that is necessary to develop and implement appropriate policies (Verkuyten et al., 2019) by limiting the degree of communication among members of different religious and cultural backgrounds.

According to Selod (2014), Muslim Americans are racialized by private citizens, denying Muslim Americans their privileges associated with social citizenship by continuously questioning and challenging their allegiance, nationality, and standing in American society. Experiencing heightened levels of prejudice, discrimination, and/or threat of actual violence by non-Muslims can have many adverse consequences for Muslim Americans (Rosenthal et al., 2015). The research problem explored in this phenomenological study, was the point of view of minorities about the tolerance displayed by majority members.

According to Simon et al. (2018), although studies have quantitatively examined tolerance from the majority's point of view, there is a lack of qualitative studies in the United States on the point of view of minorities about the tolerance displayed by majority members. Tolerance is a social function that manages the disapproval and negative actions of individuals and groups towards others (Verkuyten, et al., 2019), rather than addressing the problem in a way that promotes positive social change among individuals

and groups of different cultural and religious beliefs. Many non-Muslims associate Muslims and Islam with violence, thus showing their support for harsh civil restrictions for Muslims in the United States (Saleem et al., 2017).

According to Amer and Bagasra (2013), there is a need for psychologists to help improve and better understand the well-being of Muslim Americans in the United States, which has been mostly ignored in the psychological literature. As noted by Cainkar (2002), Helly (2004), Rubenstein (2004), and Singh (2002), Muslim Americans have experienced high rates of hate crimes, which have included violence against individuals and property (as cited by Amer & Bagasra, 2013). Hate crimes are defined as crimes against people or property that are motivated by their religion, race, gender, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation (Federal Bureau of Investigations, n.d.). These types of experiences described in this section can have negative personal and social consequences about the social interactions of this population towards non-Muslims (majority members).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance in the state of Ohio. The research also addressed the gap in the literature about the need for research to qualitatively explore the tolerance displayed by majority members towards minority members in the United States (Simon et al., 2018). Emerging themes can help explore the personal and social consequences experienced by Palestinian Muslim Americans about the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims.

### **Research Question**

Research Question: What are Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was the synthesis of Goffman's (1959) impression management theory and Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior. These theories helped to explain the lived experiences that motivate the social interactions of Palestinian Muslim Americans and non-Muslims, by emphasizing the importance that lived experiences have on human behavior and the consequences of intentions and decision making. Behavior that is based on lived experiences allows people to negotiate and make sense of their environment as a result, a person's lived experiences play a significant role in their emotions, daily thoughts, and behavioral processes (van Giesen et al., 2015).

Goffman's impression management theory states that individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them, which can influence how they are perceived, evaluated, and treated by others (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). According to impression management theory, individuals are motivated to influence the impressions of others based on the relevance of the impression, their desired goals, and discrepancy between current and desired image (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). According to Saleem et al. (2017), media outlets such as newspapers, cable news, television, and movies have frequently associated Muslims with terrorism and violence, which has contributed to the tolerance and negative attitudes displayed by non-Muslims about Muslims in the United

States. Lived experiences involving the negative attitudes displayed by non-Muslims can influence the perception of individuals and reinforce the unfavorable beliefs about, and disapproval of, out-group members, and thus influencing the way people interact with each other. According to Goffman (1959), individuals engage in self-presentation as a way of attempting to control the reactions of others towards them, which helps define social encounters and the role of the individuals in them (as cited by Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Goffman's (1959) impression management theory emphasizes how individuals plan and execute different performances depending on the audience that is present, in which the self is not an independent, fixed entity, but rather a social process (as cited by Tseñlon, 1992). According to Goffman (1959), self-presentation allows the person to define their place in the social order, set the direction and tone during social interactions, and facilitate the performance of role-governed behavior (as cited by Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Impression management is motivated by the person's self-concept, the desired and undesired social identity, the values of the audience, and the person's perceptions about how they are currently perceived by others (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Behavioral and social processes such as these are also described by Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, in which a person's intentions are influenced by the degree of control the person perceives about the behavior that is performed. Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior states that behavior is influenced not only by the individual's attitudes, but also by the social pressures that the individual experiences, which in turn influences their intentions. Intentions are believed to be influenced by

people's beliefs about the expectations of others, people's attitudes, and degree of control about the person's behavior that is performed (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ajzen (1991), intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence the behavior of people; motivational factors consist of the availability of requisite opportunities and resources, such as skills and the cooperation of others. Using these two theories to better understand the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans may help identify the personal and social consequences of non-Muslims' tolerance; the application of these theories is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

### **Nature of Study**

For this qualitative study, a phenomenological approach was used to explore Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology is the scientific study of how things appear, of phenomena just as individuals see them and how the phenomena consciously appear to individuals (as cited in Thompson, 2018). Phenomenology is focused on generating knowledge that emphasizes the direct exploration, analysis, and description of a specific phenomenon without any presuppositions, while also aiming to maximize the intuitive presentation of the experience (Matau & Van Der Wal, 2015).

Phenomenological inquiry aims to understand the content and meanings of the participants' social world (Alase, 2017). As emphasized by Alase (2017), the phenomenological approach explores in detail how participants make sense of their personal and social world, and thus describing the meanings that certain experiences, events, and states that hold. Lien et al. (2014) stated that phenomenology gives scholars a



way of understanding individuals and their interactions with their environments and other people. A phenomenological approach was appropriate for the present study because it helps answer the research question by allowing the researcher to obtain in-depth information about Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance. Phenomenology was also appropriate for this study since it places the focus on the *participants'* reflections rather than on the researcher's reflections (Thompson, 2018).

According to Moustakas (1994), the phenomenological research approach situates participants and researchers in a position that allows for multiple realities of the phenomenon to be co-constructed. Thus, a phenomenological approach makes it possible to understand the meanings and essences of the lived experiences of 10 adult Palestinian Muslim Americans, over the age of 18, from Cleveland, Ohio. According to phenomenological principles, the scientific investigation of the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans would be considered valid, since the information obtained came from the personal descriptions of the individuals who experienced the event or situation (Moustakas, 1994), thus allowing the participants to tell their stories as well as to give insights into the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims with whom they interact (Thompson, 2018).

Semistructured face-to-face interviews were used to collect personal accounts of Palestinian Muslim Americans' experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance. According to Patton (2015), the use of personal narratives helps provide an in-depth description of complex, lived experiences. As noted by Matua and Van Der Wal (2015), the main methodological focus of phenomenology is to explore, analyze, and describe a

phenomenon while also maintaining the depth and richness of the information, so as to gain an accurate picture of the phenomenon. As argued by Patton (2015), researchers should be open to the information presented to them instead of having pre-determined restrictions on the findings.

According to Moustakas (1994), analyzing texts in phenomenological studies is primarily focused on providing a detailed description of the participants' lived experiences from their own perspectives. Using inductive theory development allows thematic categories to emerge from the process and analysis of the data (Patton, 2015). The categories emerged by capturing rich descriptions of the lived experiences and attitudes of Palestinian Muslim Americans, as they described the meaning of a phenomenon which, in turn, allowed researchers to obtain more knowledge (Lien et al., 2014; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015). To document, organize, code, and develop systematic links between the data, the collected and transcribed data from the interviews were entered into Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word.

### **Definitions**

The following definitions were used in the study:

*Attitudes:* For the purpose of this study, attitudes are defined as the negative or positive evaluation towards an object, group, person, issue, or concept (American Psychological Association, n.d.-a).

*Lived experiences:* For the purpose of this study, lived experiences are defined as events that are actually lived through by the person or group (Oxford Reference, n.d.).

*Tolerance:* For the purpose of this study, tolerance is defined as the acceptance of others whose religion, customs, beliefs, ethnicity, and nationality differs from one's own (American Psychological Association, n.d.-e).

*Prejudice:* For the purpose of this study, prejudice is defined as the negative feeling towards a person or group in advance of any experience (American Psychological Association, n.d.-c).

*Discrimination:* For the purpose of this study, discrimination is defined as the differential treatment of people based on their religion, ethnicity, or nationality (American Psychological Association, n.d.-b).

*Social interaction:* For the purpose of this study, social interaction is defined as any process involving a response or reciprocal stimulation between two or more people (American Psychological Association, n.d.-d).

*Hijab:* For the purpose of this study, hijab is defined as a head garment that is used by many Muslim women as an expression of their religious faith and beliefs (Mohibullah & Kramer, 2016).

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are described as the factors, conditions, and elements of a study that are believed to be true but cannot be demonstrated to be true (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Assumptions are “holistically created reality and knowledge” (van der Westhuizen, 2013, p. 694), rather than knowledge that was socially constructed. It was assumed that the participants of the study provided honest responses during their interview. It was also assumed that the lived experiences presented by the participants

were valid and true. Finally, it was also assumed that the participants were honest in identifying themselves as Palestinian Muslim Americans when asked directly.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Ten adult Palestinian Muslim Americans, over the age of 18, from Cleveland, Ohio participated. The age range of the participants does not explore the lived experiences of those under the age of 18, which can be different from the participants involved in the study, based on their social activities and lived experiences. Palestinian Muslim Americans are those whose country of origin is Palestine and who practice a branch of Sunni Islam known as Shafi'i Islam. Palestinian Muslim Americans were used because no research about their lived experiences has been conducted.

Also, the state of Ohio was used due to the convenience of the location, which confined the study to the city of Cleveland which was chosen by the researcher. Convenience sampling was used because the population was easily accessible. Although the gender and age of the participants were reported to the researcher, their names remained confidential and were not identified in the study. Finally, the participants were given a \$10.00 gift card to a local restaurant as thanks for their participation.

### **Limitations**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of 10 Palestinian Muslim men and women in Cleveland, Ohio; thus, the study cannot be applied or generalized to the experiences of larger Muslim populations in other states or Muslim Americans who are not of Palestinian origin. Although important, the results of this study can represent the lived experiences of only Palestinian Muslim Americans in

Cleveland, Ohio. The ramifications about these limitations were not studied in this research, which may reduce the generalizability of the results.

Addressing the limitations of the study helped in determining the extent of the findings' transferability. Transferability means a study's ability to show that the findings are applicable in other contexts, which can be established through thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), thick description helps to achieve external validity by describing a phenomenon with enough detail that the researcher can evaluate whether the findings of the study can be applied in other settings, times, situations, and individuals. The narrative accounts of the participants about their personal lived experiences may or may not reflect those of other Muslim American populations.

If other researchers wish to duplicate this study in other states or with different Muslim American populations, they need to consider the geographic area and changes in the population to determine the potential of these findings' transferability. According to Amankwaa (2016), transferability can be enhanced by thoroughly describing the main aspects of the study. Researchers who may want to transfer the findings to other contexts are responsible for determining the applicability of the transfer in their context.

### **Significance**

This study sought to fill a gap in research, as it explored Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance in Cleveland, Ohio (Simon et al., 2018). This phenomenological inquiry allowed for a greater understanding of individual experiences (Lien, et al., 2014; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015). Themes that

emerged from this study could help in identifying factors that influence the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans, as well as the personal and social consequences of the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims.

Although there is previous research about discrimination, conducting interviews with members of this population of Palestinian Muslim Americans can help reveal new data on the consequences of that discrimination—an argument that is supported by the gap in literature that emphasizes the point of view of minorities (Simon et al., 2018). The results of this research may help develop and implement social strategies that can be used to improve the existing problem among these groups. Strengthening the social cohesion among Muslims and non-Muslims consists of reducing inequalities, discrimination, and developing programs and social/economic conditions that strengthen ties and increase civic engagement (Ellis & Abdi, 2017).

The social pressures experienced by Muslim Americans involving institutional discrimination, surveillance, and hate crimes, demonstrate the need for understanding their lived experiences (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). Opposition to Muslim Americans is openly expressed, which includes policies involving the profiling of Muslims and a presidential campaign that proposed a “ban on Muslims”; forcing Muslims to experience a sociopolitical environment that perceives them as outsiders (Samari, 2016). Social experiences such as these can create obstacles to participants’ openness to sharing sensitive information with an interviewer of a different ethnic origin. This issue was addressed in this research based on my ethnic origin, which allowed for new data (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). The information obtained from this study could help promote

positive social change among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States; the information could also identify factors that could contribute to further research about the problem addressed in this study.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 identified the gap in the research about the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims towards Muslim Americans. The background presented information related to the factors that influence the attitudes and perceptions of non-Muslim Americans towards Muslims in the United States, as well as the possible consequences about the lived experiences of Muslims in the United States. Also, to provide a sound theoretical foundation, the following theories were briefly discussed: the theory of planned behavior and impression management theory. The significance of studying the lived experiences of Muslim Americans was also discussed and justified. The researcher suggested results of the present study may reveal that the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans can have a significant impact on their social behavior and decision making.

Chapter 2 includes the literature search strategy, a review of the literature on the lived experiences of Muslim Americans and non-Muslims in the United States. Chapter 2 also includes a detailed discussion of Goffman's (1959) impression management theory and Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance in the state of Ohio. I sought to understand how the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans in the United States, motivated their behavior towards non-Muslims. Muslim Americans in the United States are more likely to experience discrimination than other major racial and religious groups (Zainiddinov, 2016). Many non-Muslims in the United States associate the religion of Islam and Muslims with violence, supporting harsh civil restrictions for Muslims in the United States (Saleem et al., 2017).

According to Simon et al. (2018), there is a lack of qualitative studies in the United States on the point of view of minorities about the tolerance displayed by majority members. The results of this research could help in understanding the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans, which is important in developing and implementing strategies that would promote positive social change among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States. According to the American Psychological Association (2003), research that helps identify and explain the diverse religious orientation in the United States is important in understanding the environment that motivates the behavior of people (as cited by Amer & Bagasra, 2013).

Chapter 2 focuses on literature about the lived experiences among Muslim Americans and non-Muslims in the United States, as well as literature supporting the theoretical frameworks of Goffman's (1959) impression management theory and Ajzen's



(1991) theory of planned behavior. The chapter also includes a discussion of the literature search strategies, key terms that were searched, and the databases used to conduct the searches.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The databases used to search for articles included PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, EBSCOhost, ScienceDirect, ProQuest Central, Academic Search Complete, SAGE Journals, SocINDEX with Full Text, Taylor and Francis Online, Google Scholar, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. The literature review was comprised of research about the lived experiences of Muslim Americans in the United States, as well as the perceived beliefs and attitudes of non-Muslims towards Muslims in the United States. The literature review also includes a discussion of current and previous studies addressing the theories about the attitudes, lived experiences, behavior, and actions of the individuals.

A filtered search was conducted for the literature published after 2013, with the exception for searches on the chosen theories about Goffman's (1959) impression management theory and Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior. The following keywords were used: *lived experiences + Muslim Americans + United States, attitudes post-9/11, perceived beliefs + non-Muslims, theory of planned behavior + Ajzen, impression management theory + Goffman.*

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theories used as the theoretical foundation for this study are Goffman's (1959) impression management theory and Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior. There are some Muslim and non-Muslim Arabs who present themselves differently than

their origin of ethnicity in order to “enjoy privileges of whiteness, while others do not” (Selod, 2014 p. 3). Goffman’s (1959) impression management theory states that individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them, which can influence the way they are treated, evaluated and perceived by others (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

### **Goffman’s Impression Management Theory**

Goffman’s impression management theory describes a social process in which the performance of the individual (actor) constantly changes depending on the audience that is present (Tseëlon, 1992). Goffman’s impression management theory states that individuals attempt to control the impressions of others as a way of supporting and maintaining their desired social identity and self-concept (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Impression management theory states that people present themselves in ways they feel others will approve (Paliszkiewicz & Madra-Sawicka, 2016). Research study conducted found majority of Muslim men admitted they avoid discussing issues about religion and politics, fearing they will be viewed as anti-American (Selod, 2014). According to Goffman’s (1959) impression management theory, factors such as desired social identity, role constraints, values of the audience, and discrepancies between current and desired social identity, motivate the behavior of individuals (cited by Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Goffman’s (1959) impression management theory emphasizes how the self is a social process, rather than an independent fixed entity (cited Tseëlon, 1992). Self-presentation (impression management) helps individuals define their social role when interacting with others, as well as the direction and tone of the interaction (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Impression management theory states that individuals plan and perform

differently depending on the audience that is present (Tseëlon, 1992); a social process that is also emphasized by Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior about the intentions and actions of individuals. The theory of planned behavior suggests that behavior is guided by the beliefs about outcomes, the normative expectations of others, and the presence of factors that may hinder or further the performance of the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000).

### **Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior**

The theory of planned behavior emphasizes the intentions of the individual to perform specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Intentions represent the motivational factors that guide behavior, indicating the degree of effort that is planned towards the performance of a given behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The theory states that behavior is motivated by three kinds of considerations: behavioral, normative, and control beliefs (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000). The person's beliefs about the outcome of their behavior, the subjective norms involving the interpretations and reactions of others, as well as the person's ability to perform a behavior influences their intentions and decision making (Ajzen, 1991).

The theory of planned behavior describes the cognitive regulation that influences and motivates behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavior control plays a strong role in determining the intentions and actions of individuals; in which people tend to avoid or are less likely to perform acts involving uncertain or perceived negative outcomes. According to this theory, intentions and perceptions involving behavioral control can significantly contribute to the prediction of behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Described by van

Giesen et al. (2015), behavior that is developed based on earlier experiences help people interpret and understand their environment.

People's experiences have a significant influence on their emotions, thoughts, and behavioral processes (van Giesen et al., 2015). Muslim American men are more likely to be perceived as being disloyal and a threat to national security, while women who express their religious beliefs by wearing a head garment (hijab) are constantly questioned about their cultural values and nationality (Selod, 2014). These types of lived experiences can negatively influence the behavior among members of this population towards majority members. Described by Goffman (1959), impression management is motivated by the individual's perceptions about how they are currently perceived by others (Leary & Kowalski, 1990); similar to Muslim women who do not wear the hijab fearing the disapproval and impressions of majority members (Ali et al., 2015). Applying the theory of planned behavior and impression management theory in exploring the consequences and functions about the tolerance displayed by majority members, can help in understanding the lived experiences that motivate the behavior of Palestinian Muslim Americans.

### **Literature Related to Key Concepts**

According to Cainkar (2002), Helly (2004), Rubenstein (2004), and Singh (2002), Muslims Americans in the United States have experienced acts of violence and high rates of hate crimes based on their race, ethnicity, and religious beliefs (as cited by Amer & Bagasra, 2013). These types of lived experiences can have negative consequences about the behavior displayed by this population towards out-group members. Muslim

Americans are more likely to experience discrimination based on their religion and race compared to other groups in the United States (Zainiddinov, 2016).

Acts of terrorism by individuals identifying themselves as Muslim and the media's coverage on extremist Islamic groups has created a sense of fear among non-Muslims in the United States. A poll taken directly after September 11 found many Americans (60%) have associated Muslims with fear-related terms such as fanatic, violence, war, radical, and terrorism (as cited by Samari, 2016). As noted by Rosenthal et al. (2015), there has been an increased apprehension about the integration of Muslim populations in the United States, which has continued to increase since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City. For example, a study found that although individuals held a positive attitude toward Muslims, they still supported a ban on headscarves as well as rejected the founding of Islamic schools and building mosques (Verkuyten et al., 2019).

### **Media Portrayal of Muslim Americans**

As noted by Canan and Foroutan (2016), Muslims and Islam tend to trigger derogative behavior and attitudes from non-Muslims, often supporting harsher restrictions on civil liberties, perceived threat of terrorist attacks, or government surveillance (Choma et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2017). Portrayals of terroristic attacks by Muslim extremists in the media has increased concerns about the migration and integration of Muslims in the United States, leading to many Muslim Americans being falsely accused of being sympathetic to the extremist groups (McDowell-Smith, 2013). Non-Muslims viewing footages of attacks caused by Muslim extremist groups were also

found to correspond with less opposition to restricting civil liberties and government surveillance of Muslim Americans (Choma, et al., 2018). Muslims in Western countries such as the United States and Europe has led to strong public debates on the building of mosques and Islamic schools as well as wearing headscarves in public, fueling questions of tolerance about Muslim practices and beliefs within the limits of western liberal societies at the center of the debates (Verkuyten, et al., 2019).

Previous research has shown American media outlets have greatly represented Muslims and people of Middle Eastern or Arab descent as evil and violent terrorists, influencing negative attitudes towards Muslim Americans from non-Muslims (Saleem et al., 2017). The American media reporting terrorism showed an increase in mortality salience—death-related thoughts—among non-Muslims which led them to have prejudiced beliefs toward Muslim Americans. Individuals facing mortality salience tend to have increased aversion towards those who are culturally different from them (outgroups) (McDowell-Smith, 2013). Lived experiences involving the vandalism and defacing of mosques, harassment on college campuses, and racial profiling in communities and airports, can create unfavorable and negative attitudes among members of these groups (Samari, 2016). Studies have confirmed the increased probability of such acts, reporting that the negative implications of mortality salience include increased prejudice, aggression, or racism (McDowell-Smith, 2013).

Events such as these and acts of violence among Muslim Americans and non-Muslims in the United States can influence prejudice and discrimination towards out-group members. There is an urgent need for psychologists to help improve and better

understand the well-being of Muslim Americans in the United States (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). The consequences about the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims towards Muslim Americans in the United States can be observed throughout society; cable news, television, newspapers, media outlets, movies, and video games frequently associate Muslims with terrorism and violence (Saleem et al., 2017). “Social media and online community attendance have increasingly become a significant part of people’s social lives” (Paliszkiewicz & Madra-Sawicka, 2016, p. 203). As a result, impression management can also be used through the use of media about social and political issues as a way of reaching a larger audience, which in turn can influence prejudice and discrimination towards those with unfavorable social characteristics that are defined by majority members.

More than other informational sources, the media has a significant influence about the attitudes that are formed and held by non-Muslims towards Muslim Americans; implicitly motivating the activation of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim bias in the United States when terroristic indications are present (Saleem et al., 2017). These types of attitudes can motivate prejudice and discrimination among non-Muslims towards Muslim Americans; motivating tolerance among members of these groups that prevents further insight about the lived experiences of Muslim Americans. Several scholars have reported that individuals who have traits of tolerance and open-mindedness can control mortality salience in a manner that is socially constructive (McDowell-Smith, 2013). Studies have also shown that positive media depictions of outgroups support positive attitudes toward

outgroups, which “increases sympathy and reduces the attribution of causal responsibility to outgroup members” (Saleem, et al., 2017, p. 844).

Tolerance involves acceptance regardless of one’s disapproval, which prevents negative attitudes and beliefs from turning into negative actions (Verkuyten, et al., 2019). According to Talaska et al. (2013), “emotional prejudices already prove superior predictors separately of evaluations and behavioral intentions, which are closely linked to actual behavior” (p. 264). There is a lack of qualitative studies in the United States exploring the point of view of minorities about the tolerance displayed by majority members (Simon et al., 2018). As a result, this problem is not fully explored in a way that allows for the possible discovering of new information; which can be used in developing and implementing social strategies that contribute to positive social change among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States.

Talaska et al. (2013) suggested that compared to stereotypes and beliefs, emotional prejudices are twice as closely related to racial discrimination, as well as self-reported and observed discrimination. Lived experiences involving prejudice and acts of discrimination can have negative consequences about the attitudes among individuals and groups, as well as the attitudes that are formed towards out-group members. Described by Ajzen’s (1991) theory of planned behavior, behavior is also influenced by the social pressures that individuals experience, which in turn influences their intentions and decision making.



## **Muslim Women**

Many Muslim women have reported experiencing prejudice and discrimination, which has led some to remove their hijab due to negative stereotypes and portrayals of Muslim women (Ali et al., 2015). As noted by Mohibullah and Kramer (2016), veiled Muslim women are often portrayed by the American media as oppressed and in distress, as well as in need of being liberated from their male-dominated cultures. The hijab, in its Arabic and broadest meaning, is often referred to as modesty of dress and action; although it is commonly used in a way to describe the traditional headscarf Muslim women wear (Ali et al., 2015).

According to Mohibullah and Kramer (2016), the portrayal of Muslim women being in distress is influenced by the veil they wear, in all its forms: the *hijab* (a head wrap), the *niqab* (a head wrap revealing only the eyes), and the *burqa* (a face covering head wrap). Contrary to this popular belief, it was found that the veil (hijab) conveys different ideals, meanings, and desires which are not solely determined by the Islamic practice (Mohibullah & Kramer, 2016). For some Muslim women, the hijab is a symbol of religious practice associated with empowerment, identity, an indication of faith, and commitment; for others, it is a form of resistance against Western culture imposition (Ali et al., 2015).

Hijab-wearing women reported becoming targets of verbal and physical assaults from non-Muslim Americans in public because of the portrayal associated with the hijab as opposing Western values and as a cultural threat—signifying the oppression of women and the opposition of Western ideals of feminism (Selod, 2014). The assaults are a result

of Muslim women being perceived as not physically intimidating therefore those who wear the hijab increasingly encounter hostility in public areas. According to Ali et al. (2015), the images the American media portrays of the oppressed hijab-wearing Muslim woman, has led to the hijab becoming a symbol of backwardness and gender oppression.

Stigma-related threats create negative emotions and thought processes, which can lead the individual to actively disidentify or conceal his or her group identity (Khan, 2014). For instance, a study found hijab-wearing women who reported stronger perceptions of workplace discrimination and lower social class indicated lower levels of job satisfaction, which supported a Gallup research that found “employed Muslim Americans reported lower ratings of overall job satisfaction compared with their peers in other religious groups” (Ali et al., 2015, p. 154). Prejudice and discrimination towards many hijab-wearing Muslim women led to some deciding to remove their hijab (Ali et al., 2015).

A study conducted by Khan (2014) supported this notion, finding that the Muslim participants reported changing their routine in fear of possibly experiencing discrimination and even violence because they identify as Muslims. The study also showed the participants reported having to prove their “Americanness” to non-Muslims and a collective awareness of how Muslims are perceived by non-Muslims. Research has shown biased attitudes predict discriminatory intention better than actual discriminatory behavior and behavior became less of a predictor when direct contact with the target (outgroup member) was involved (Talaska et al., 2013).

A study conducted by King and Ahmad (2010) found that while overt discrimination did not significantly differ among female Muslim applicants wearing religious attire such as the hijab and Muslim women who did not, the study found that the hijab-wearing Muslim women applicants experienced covert discrimination (as cited by Ali, et al., 2015). Another study supported this finding, where although the participants did not attempt to detach themselves from the group, they still feared the prejudiced views of non-Muslims may still influence their perception of individual Muslims (Khan, 2014). Additionally, with the rise of Islamophobia in recent years in the United States, many Muslim women showed concern about their ability to remain employed while also holding true to their faith; this daily stressor can cause negative health implications for Muslim women (Ali, et al., 2015).

### **Muslim Men**

As stated by Selod (2014), Muslim Americans have been attacked by fellow Americans as a result of the belief that they are a group posing a threat to American society; resulting in Muslim Americans being treated as unworthy of the universal protections given to American citizens. Selod (2014) discovered, that identifying as a Muslim has become racialized, which is based on participants reporting fellow citizens questioning and interrogating them about their nationality and loyalty to the United States once they identified themselves as a Muslim. When male participants identified themselves as Muslims they were treated as a threat to national security. For example, Muslim men have reported being questioned by private citizens about their Islamic values

in private settings such as at the workplace or at social gatherings with close friends and acquaintances (Selod, 2014).

The study also found that most Muslim men admitted to avoiding discussions about politics and religion in fear of being viewed as anti-American pertaining to their views on foreign policy; the men censored themselves to avoid possible interrogation about their values and loyalty. Religious identity and gender are the main characteristics associated with terrorism that motivated Muslim men to conscientiously avoid discussing their political and religious views in order to avoid being scrutinized (Selod, 2014).

According to Selod (2014), Muslim Americans are racialized by private citizens, denying Muslim Americans their privileges associated with social citizenship by continuously questioning and challenging their allegiance, nationality, and standing in American society. Compared to Muslim women, Muslim men are often criminalized by fellow citizens because they identified themselves as a Muslim (Selod, 2014).

### **Discrimination Towards Muslims Based on Race, Ethnicity, and Age**

Racialized by others, Muslim Americans are denied privileges and are continuously challenged and questioned about their nationality, allegiance, and position within American society (Selod, 2014). According to Zainiddinov (2016), Muslim Americans also experience discrimination based on their race and ethnicity. For example, reports indicated that Muslim Americans or those perceived to be as a Muslim were targeted and denied employment (Samari, 2016). A study conducted by Zainiddinov (2016) found Muslim American women are less likely to report several types of

discrimination compared to men; with White Muslim men more likely to report they experienced discrimination compared to White, Black, and Asian women.

Studies investigating racial bias confirmed that stereotypes and other beliefs explain and validate discrimination, as well as indicating that emotional prejudices have become more direct predictors of discrimination (Talaska et al., 2013). The discrimination faced by many Muslim Americans include verbal abuse, physical threats, as well as religious and racial profiling (Zainiddinov, 2016). Muslim Americans have experienced discrimination based on their color, religion, and ethnicity. They are also more likely to experience discrimination compared to other religious groups such as Mormons, Protestants, Catholics, atheists, and Jews. The discriminatory experiences of Muslim Americans have permeated every aspect of their lives, including encountering such experiences in leisure settings, workplaces, and prisons (Zainiddinov, 2016).

Results of a study indicated Asian Muslims reported the lowest incidences of perceived discrimination, compared to white Muslims; almost all the Muslim racial/ethnic groups have a higher chance of reporting they experienced one or more type of perceived discrimination (Zainiddinov, 2016). Zainiddinov (2016) also found older Muslims reported discrimination at lower rates than younger Muslims. The study also found the association persisted for Hispanic Muslims and disappeared for mixed race/other and Black Muslims, after controlling for socio-demographic characteristics (Zainiddinov, 2016).

## **Islamophobia and Health**

According to Samari (2016), Islamophobia negatively influences the health of Muslim Americans by disrupting the individual system (identity concealment and stress reactivity), interpersonal system (socialization processes and social relationships), and structural system (media coverage and institutional policies) of Muslim Americans. “Beyond socioeconomic differences and differential health-care access between minority and majority groups, explanatory mechanisms for ethnic and racial differences in health have included differences in physiology, exposure to discrimination and bias, and acculturative stress” (Padela & Zaidi, 2018, p. 2). The belief of non-Muslim Americans about Muslim Americans as a threat to American society has led to many Muslim Americans being attacked and treated as unworthy of the universal protections given to citizens of the United States (Selod, 2014). Bounded by a shared religious tradition, Muslim Americans represent an ethnically and racially diverse community (Padela & Zaidi, 2018). The discrimination experienced by Muslim Americans may be a combination based on religious and appearance discrimination (Samari, 2016).

Americans identifying as Muslim have become racialized by fellow Americans, questioning and interrogating them about their loyalty to the country and their nationality (Selod, 2014). Lived experiences such as these not only can cause emotional and psychological harm, but also physical harm. As described by Samari (2016), research has shown the rise of Islamophobia in the United States has had negative health consequences among members of this population; increasing stress, risk factors, physiological processes, reducing access to resources, participation in health care, and

health promoting behaviors. Samari (2016) noted that Islamophobia negatively impacts the health of Muslim Americans. Similar to culture and ethnicity, religion also can play a significant role in determining health outcomes (Padela & Zaidi, 2018).

There is a common belief that the hijab is worn by poor, less educated women who are not empowered; this type of discrimination can cause stress on Muslim women (Ali et al., 2015). A study found that within the health-care system, Muslim women wearing the hijab were assumed to be ignorant, at times refused care, and had abusive husbands; some women also reported a lack of cultural sensitivity and discrimination in hospitals, reporting that providers felt Muslim women were “‘stupid’ and misinterpreted their concern for as shame for their bodies” (Padela & Zaidi, 2018, p. 5). The socialization processes and social relationships of Muslim Americans are disrupted, as well as media coverage and institutional policies contribute to many Muslim Americans concealing their identity, causing increased stress reactivity (Samari, 2016).

Research has suggested that identifying as “the target of discrimination is a major source of stress,” affecting the individual’s physical and mental well-being (Ali et al., 2015, p. 155). Muslim Americans reporting incidences such as harassment on college campuses, racial profiling at airports and streets, defacing and vandalizing of mosques, freezing assets of Muslim charities, and alienation from the health system, are examples of the lived experiences of Muslim Americans that contribute to the negative health outcomes influenced by Islamophobia (Samari, 2016). About health care, Muslim patients perceiving multiple unmet needs and a lack of cultural accommodations in the health care system may be influenced in their future health-care seeking behavior because

they may be less forthcoming in discussing their health with their present health-care providers if they felt uncomfortable with previous providers (Padela & Zaidi, 2018). By disrupting the known determinants of health (individual, interpersonal, and structural processes) for experiencing discrimination, stress, and illness, the health of Muslim Americans has been negatively influenced by Islamophobia (Samari, 2016).

### **Mitigating Intergroup Conflict**

Intergroup conflict among Muslim Americans and non-Muslim Americans is often associated with the activities of Muslim extremists; however, to resolve such conflict, empathy and intergroup forgiveness is necessary (McDowell-Smith, 2013). Some have recommended interventions that emphasize changing how individuals interact, creating programs and social/economic conditions that will strengthen ties, reducing discriminations and inequities, as well as increasing civic engagement (Ellis & Abdi, 2017). Also, theories such as the common ingroup identity model propose combining various groups into a single group can increase the likelihood of reducing intergroup conflict. According to this model, when ingroups and outgroups are recategorized into a single group, the likelihood of more prosocial behaviors being expressed will increase since intergroup bias is reduced, and representations will be transformed from “us” vs. “them” to an inclusive “we” (McDowell-Smith, 2013). Tolerance is described as an individual accepting things or events that he or she disagrees with, dislikes, or disapproves of, which “may be the only thing that stands between peaceful coexistence and violent intergroup conflict” (van Doorn, 2014, p. 1).



Emphasizing empathy in terms of forgiving members of an offending group may help mitigate the intergroup conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States (McDowell-Smith, 2013). Although collective tragedies and terrorism place negative outcomes on people's well-being, research shows that the negative outcomes on a person's well-being lessens with time, at the personal level (Choma, et al., 2018). Prosocial values promoting equality, empathy, compassion, and helping motivate self-esteem and self-worth; as a result, developing prosocial values within a culture can facilitate socially constructive goals related to intergroup relations (McDowell-Smith, 2013). Research also showed tolerance increased when respect for members of a disapproved group was present; which found that Tea Party supporters showed respect by viewing outgroup members such as Muslim Americans as equal citizens, positively predicted tolerance towards the outgroup members (Simon et al., 2018). Also, while common ingroup identity may not always eliminate social biases, cognitive and motivational processes that consist of ingroup favoritism can help reduce intergroup bias (McDowell-Smith, 2013).

### **Multiple Social Categorization**

Social psychological research has indicated that multiple social categorization—“any intergroup context that involves perceiving more than a single basis for social classification”—can also help change people's perceptions and judgements of outgroups (Canan & Foroutan, 2016, p. 1906). Using a hypothetical situation of a Muslim marrying into the participants' families, Canan and Foroutan (2016) found that for Muslim and Christian women, perception differences did not completely disappear. Although when

the same hypothetical situation involved a Muslim man marrying into the participants' families, multiple social categorization had no effect on the participants' perceptions (Canan & Foroutan, 2016). The study also found the categories were also associated with context related stereotypes and/or connected with role identities. While the study showed that multiple social categorization only worked for Muslim women, its application does help reduce negative attitudes and behavior towards outgroups (Canan & Foroutan, 2016).

### **Polyculturalism**

Encouraging polyculturalism has shown to help in reducing negative attitudes and behavioral intentions toward Muslim Americans. Polyculturalism is defined as “the belief that different racial and ethnic groups interact and influence each other’s cultures” (Rosenthal et al., 2015, p. 543). Advocating polyculturalism involves looking at cultures as constantly changing, being dynamic, and deeply connected with each other through the interaction of different ethnic and racial groups as well as their shared histories. When polyculturalism was encouraged among undergraduates in a Northeastern university and community adults across the United States results showed the participants had more positive policy, intergroup attitudes, and behavioral intentions toward Muslim Americans. The associations also remained when the researchers controlled for sociodemographic characteristics, such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, and nativity (Rosenthal, et al., 2015).

Merging Western and Islamic values may pose challenges in resolving Islamic practices within the United States democracy, however both processes are flexible to

allow for modification and questioning in ways that will best represent American society (Lamont & Collet, 2013). Also, endorsing polyculturalism can help foster positive ethnic, racial, and religious intergroup behaviors and attitudes by emphasizing connections between members from different groups and reducing the emphasis on cultural boundaries. Showing greater endorsement in polyculturalism is associated with the belief of social equality among different groups, appreciating and being comfortable with diversity, as well as showing more interest in interacting with individuals from different backgrounds (Rosenthal, et al., 2015).

### **Intergroup Trust**

Intergroup trust is also necessary to promote friendly intergroup relationships, which is the “sureness that an outgroup has positive intentions and behaves benevolently” (Choma et al., 2018 p. 67). A study conducted by Vedder et al. (2017) found lower intergroup anxiety helped explain the association between the positive evaluation of Muslims and positive contact with Muslims (as cited by Choma et al., 2018). Participants in a study found that their democratic and Islamic values were compatible to an extent. The participants reported that their Islamic values concerning the respect for others, equality, human rights, freedom, and emphasizing education aligned with their democratic values. About conflicting values, participants of a study reported conflict about Euro-Christian tradition, God-centric vs. human-centric structure, and the flaws of uncontrolled capitalism (Lamont & Collet, 2013).

## **Improving Communities**

Social psychology emphasizes the significance of the relational aspects of communities, which are the ways in which the individual perceives similarities with others in his or her community or a sense of belongingness. Preventing support for foreign terrorist organizations and violent extremism can occur by building community resilience through social connections and genuine partnerships, as well as strong bonds within religious/ethnic subgroups and among individuals and other members of the community (Ellis & Abdi, 2017). Establishing genuine partnerships between governing institutions and communities can help to build stronger bonds, connections, and bridges between members of the community and the governing institutions (Ellis & Abdi, 2017). Also, “social connection is at the heart of resilient communities; any strategy to increase community resilience must both harness and enhance existing social connections and endeavor to not damage or diminish them” (Ellis & Abdi, 2017, p. 289). The absence of strong connections with others who are different from the individual—bridging social capital—allows the individual to become vulnerable to violent extremist routes.

A study found that creating robust Muslim American communities may help serve as a preventative measure against radicalization by helping reduce the social isolation of individuals who are at risk of becoming radicalized (as cited by Ellis & Abdi, 2017). Although the application of multiple social categorization only worked for Muslim women for the study, Canan and Foroutan (2016) noted applying multiple social categorization helped reduce negative attitudes and behavior towards outgroup members. Research about Muslim community engagement and partnerships may also help in

preventing support for extremism and joining terrorist organizations (Ellis & Abdi, 2017). Conducting research that attempts to explore the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans, can help in identifying the functions and consequences about the tolerance displayed by majority members.

Further research is needed that explores the attitudes of minorities about the tolerance displayed by majority members in the United States (Simon et al., 2018). Studies investigating racial bias confirmed that stereotypes and other beliefs explain and validate discrimination, as well as indicating that emotional prejudices have become more direct predictors of discrimination (Talaska et al., 2013). Through interviews the lived experiences of members of this population can be explored, which allows for the discovery of new information about the tolerance displayed by majority members. According to Ajzen (1991), concepts such as social attitudes about behavioral dispositions, play an important role in attempting to predict and explain human behavior.

Obstacles and limitations found in previous research about the openness of participants to share sensitive information with interviewers of different ethnic origin, was addressed in this research based on the ethnic origin of the interviewer; allowing for the potential of newly discovered information not found in previous research (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). The potential information obtained from this study can be used to promote positive social change among community members of different cultural, ethnic, and religious beliefs. Building community resilience through social connections and genuine partnerships can also help contribute to preventing support for foreign terrorist organizations and violent extremism (Ellis & Abdi, 2017). According to the American

Psychological Association (2003), psychological research that describes and identifies the diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious orientation in American society is important in understanding the environment that influences individual behavior (as cited by Amer & Bagasra, 2013). The study explored the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim American adults in the state of Ohio, about the tolerance displayed by majority members.

### **Conclusion**

The need for qualitatively exploring the tolerance between ingroup/majority members (non-Muslims) and outgroup/minority members (Muslim Americans) in the United States was addressed in this study. According to Amer and Bagasra (2013), the limited amount of research which concentrates on only a few Muslim subgroups can actually pose a risk of spreading simple-minded generalizations and stereotypes about the whole Muslim community. Research that explores the lived experiences of Muslim Americans is greatly needed (Khan, 2014); doing so can allow us to gain a better understanding of how events, situations, or out-group behavior can influence the lived experiences and beliefs of this population.

### **Summary**

Previous research showed Muslim Americans experienced physical threats, verbal abuse, and racial profiling because of their color, ethnicity, and religion (Amer & Bagasra, 2013; Zainiddinov, 2016). According to Selod (2014), Muslim Americans experienced these attacks from fellow Americans, as a result of the belief that they are a group posing a threat to American society. Since the tragic attack on September 11, 2001,

there has also been an increased apprehension about the integration of Muslims in the United States (Rosenthal et al., 2015).

Previous research also showed American media outlets' portrayals of Muslims, people of Middle Eastern or Arab descent, and Islam negatively influenced non-Muslim attitudes towards Muslims (Saleem et al., 2017). As a result, many non-Muslims tend to be less opposed to the harsh restrictions of civil liberties and government surveillances of Muslim Americans (Choma et al., 2018). According to Samari (2016), the rise of Islamophobia in the United States poses negative health implications for Muslim Americans. Thus, social pressures involving discrimination, surveillance, and hate crimes experienced by Muslim Americans demonstrates the need to understand the lived experiences of this population (Amer & Bagasra, 2013).

Chapter 2 provided a detailed literature review about the lived experiences among Muslim Americans and non-Muslims in the United States. Current literature and research pertaining to the topic, as well as impression management theory and the theory of planned behavior to create a theoretical foundation for the argument were used to provide an extensive and in-depth review. Also, the literature search strategy was addressed in the chapter.

Chapter 3 discusses the design of the research. The chapter also provides a rationale for the chosen research design, explain why other designs were rejected, and a review of the qualitative research questions. Finally, my role as the researcher, a detailed description of the methodology, and issues of trustworthiness are addressed.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance in the state of Ohio. As stated by Simon et al. (2018), further research is needed to understand the point of view of minorities in the United States about the tolerance displayed by majority members, which was indicated in recent research literature and the problem addressed in this study. A phenomenological design was used to explore the lived experiences of the participants in this study, which allowed the researcher to better understand how individuals perceive and interpret events and situations (Moustakas, 1994; as cited in Thompson, 2018). In this chapter, I discuss, and offer a rationale for, the phenomenological design. I also review the qualitative research question, explain why other designs were rejected, discuss my role as the researcher, describe the methodology, and discuss the issues of trustworthiness about this study.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

A qualitative research method was chosen for this study since it allows researchers to explore a social or human problem through a distinct methodological inquiry process (Thompson, 2018), to study a phenomenon in its natural environment and to provide a holistic picture of the phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While a variety of approaches could have been employed, phenomenology was chosen because it provides detailed and first-hand information about individuals' experiences (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). The phenomenological design scientifically studies how the



phenomena consciously appears to individuals and how individuals interpret the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994; as cited in Thompson, 2018). The phenomenological design focuses on generating data that directly explores, analyzes, and describes a specific phenomenon without making any assumptions, while also maximizing the individual's perspective of the experience (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). In order to conduct this phenomenological study, the research question was used to focus on the lived experiences of the participants: What are Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance?

The central phenomena of this study were the Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of prejudice and discrimination by non-Muslims, as well as the personal and social consequences of the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims towards them. The lack of research on the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans about the prejudice, discrimination, and tolerance displayed by non-Muslims in the United States (Simon et al., 2018) was addressed in this study. The research can benefit from an interdisciplinary approach because an intergroup relations perspective can enhance understanding about the nature of tolerance, as well as the social situations that it emerges from (van Doorn, 2014).

A phenomenological research design focuses on understanding the content and meanings of the individuals' social world, exploring how individuals make sense of their personal and social world; which provides descriptions of the meanings of specific experiences, events, and states held by individuals (Alase, 2017). The phenomenological research design allows for multiple realities of the phenomenon to be co-constructed by

participants and researchers (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology focuses on the participants' reflections instead of the researcher's (Thompson, 2018).

A phenomenological approach is designed to help answer the chosen research question by allowing the documentation of in-depth information about the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans; as well as the personal and social consequences about the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims. Therefore, selecting a phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study (Thompson, 2018). In accordance to phenomenological principles, the scientific investigation of the lived experiences of participants is valid since the information the researcher obtained came from the personal descriptions of the individuals who experienced the situation or event (Moustakas, 1994); which allows the participants to discuss their stories and provide insight about the phenomenon being studied (Thompson, 2018). Therefore, selecting this design was appropriate for this study since it allowed the researcher to understand the meanings and essences of the lived experiences of 10 adult Palestinian Muslim Americans (N = 10), over the age of 18, from Cleveland, Ohio.

The Palestinian Muslim American participants from Cleveland, Ohio, were asked to share their lived experiences about their interactions with non-Muslim Americans. Semistructured face-to-face interviews were used as a method to collect the personal accounts of the participants' lived experiences about the tolerance displayed by majority members (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Using personal narratives gave insight and an in-depth description of the complex lived experiences of the participants (Patton, 2015). The main methodological focus of phenomenology is exploring, analyzing, and describing a

phenomenon; while maintaining the depth and richness of the information, to gain an accurate picture of the phenomenon (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). When using the chosen approach, researchers must be open to the information presented rather than having pre-determined restrictions (Patton, 2015).

The analysis of texts in phenomenological studies primarily focuses on giving detailed descriptions of the participants' lived experiences from their own perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, this study used inductive theory development, which allowed for thematic categories to emerge from processing and analyzing the data obtained from the participants (Patton, 2015). Categories began to emerge by capturing the rich descriptions of the lived experiences of the selected participants through their descriptions about the meaning of the phenomenon being studied, which allowed the researcher to obtain more knowledge (Lien et al., 2014; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015). In phenomenology, categories allow for the evolution of themes to develop, providing the needed focus for the analysis of this study.

Choosing an ethnographic design would be an option, however, this design focuses on a system, a cultural group, or a social group which would not make it an appropriate choice for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethnography places less focus on the individual, specific times, or places; instead, placing focus more on groups or systems. Also, data collection for an ethnographic study involves observations and interviews but over the course of six months to a year, which was not appropriate for this type of study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A case study design is another option that can be employed in qualitative research. However, the case study design would not be appropriate for the study based on its focus and understanding of a single case or the use of a specific case to investigate a problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also, a case study involves the collection of data for a longer period of time, which is another reason why a case study design is also inappropriate for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The shortcomings about the discussed designs in achieving the purpose of this study provided justification of choosing a phenomenological design as the most appropriate choice.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In conducting research, the role a researcher depends on the situation, the aim of the research, the researcher's theoretical stance, and his or her personality and values (Postholm, 2019). I will assume the role of the interviewer and the transcriptionist of all data collected for this research. In qualitative research, the researcher must identify how his or her experiences and backgrounds shape the interpretations he or she has made through the coding and theme development process (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

The researcher is the "key instrument" in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018); where data is mediated through the researcher (the human instrument), instead of through machines, inventories, or questionnaires (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). The role of the researcher is to attempt to explore the lived experiences of the participants, which may motivate their decision making and behavior towards others (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In my role as the interviewer, I had limited interactions with the participants and no involvement in their activities. The limited interactions with the

participants occurred through individual semistructured interviews. I also served as the contact person for the study as well as the coder and analyzer of the obtained data.

The participants and I had only one characteristic in common: identifying as a Palestinian Muslim American. I did not work with, had supervisory duties, or had any other interactions with any of the participants. As a result, power differentials did not influence the data collection and analysis for this study. Minimizing researcher bias is possible by developing an understanding what bias entails and its possible influence on the findings for the study (Chan et al., 2013; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). To mitigate the possible damaging effects of researcher bias, reflexivity was used as the primary approach, which suggests the researcher practice self-reflection about potential preconceptions or biases pertaining to the research (Rodham et al., 2015).

As a qualitative researcher, I examined and acknowledged my own biases and remained aware of any biases during the development of the interview questions, while conducting the interviews, during the analysis of the data, and while interpreting the findings (Rodham et al., 2015). I employed Husserl's *epoché* concept, or bracketing, as a way of avoiding the influence of my personal biases in conducting the study. Bracketing is "the key to understanding an experience, enabling the researcher to look beyond preconceptions and tap directly into its essence" (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015, p. 23).

Bracketing allows researchers to be in a state of neutrality (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). The four techniques suggested to achieve bracketing are: (a) mental preparation before deciding the research paradigm, (b) decide the scope of the literature review, (c) plan for data collection that uses semistructured interviews which are guided

by open-ended questions, and (d) plan for data analysis (Chan et al., 2013). Member checking was also used when all interviews were completed and transcribed, which helped to ensure all responses were correct by allowing the participants to review and clarify their responses (Thomas, 2017).

My role as the researcher was to ensure and observe the ethical requirements specified by the Belmont Report by assuring the participants that the interviews as well as the data being collected will remain confidential for five years (Office for Human Research Protections, 2018). An informed consent form was provided to the participants containing all the information about the present study, this assured the participants as well as helped establish rapport and comfort when discussing their experiences during the interviews. As a researcher, I strived to maintain an objective and open attitude, as well as refrained from discussing my personal views about the research topic with my participants. For the study, I served as the transcriptionist to transcribe the interviews; while it will be impossible to be completely bias free, acknowledging and being aware of my own personal biases and opinions helped minimize the influence of any biases and opinions I may have about the study (Chan et al., 2013; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015).

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The sample size for the study was guided by information power (Malterud et al., 2016). Information power helps guide researchers to an adequate sample size for qualitative studies by suggesting less participants are needed based on the degree of information each sample holds relevant to the study being conducted (Malterud, et al.,

2016). Although data saturation has been widely accepted as a methodological principle in qualitative studies, it was not appropriate to use as a sampling strategy for the present study because it is closely tied to a specific methodology (grounded theory) and was inconsistently applied to other forms of qualitative research (Malterud et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2018). According to information power, the size of a sample with adequate information depends on: (a) the aim of the study, (b) sample specificity, (c) use of established theory, (d) quality of dialogue, and (e) analysis strategy (Malterud et al., 2016).

In addition to using information power as a guide in selecting the size of the sample, purposeful sampling was also used as the criterion strategy. Depending on the specific approach, purposeful sampling has three considerations: (a) whom to select as participants or sites for the study, (b) the specific type of sampling strategy, and (c) the size of the sample that will be studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases, which are described as cases that people learn significant amounts of information about important issues specific to the purpose of the study (Patton, 2015). Criterion sampling is a type of purposeful sampling that refers to selecting participants who meet a preset criterion determined by the researcher (Patton, 2015; Suri, 2011). Criterion sampling allows the researcher to increase the likelihood of choosing participants possessing valuable information relevant to the topic of the present study, which was appropriate for the present study since the selected participants represented some characteristic that the researcher was interested in studying (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Convenience sampling was also used to recruit the participants in the study; which is a type of non-probability sampling that selects participants based on the willingness to participate, accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, and who meet the criteria for the study (Etikan et al., 2016). To provide an in-depth description of a specific subgroup, researchers should choose a small sample (Patton, 2015). Choosing a small sample helps reduce variation, simplifies analysis, and facilitates group interviewing; helping to narrow the range of variation and to focus on similarities (Palinkas, 2015). The assumption of convenience sampling refers to members of the target population are similar, meaning that there are no differences in the research results if the data collected came from a random sample, an inaccessible population, or a cooperative sample (Etikan et al., 2016). Similar samples also enable researchers to make meaningful comparisons across studies which are relatively consistent in design and conceptual scope (Suri, 2011).

The nature of the study allowed for up to 12 participants to be recruited, however due to time constraints and the area where the participants were recruited, 10 participants was appropriate for the study (Boddy, 2016). A sample of 2–10 participants is appropriate in phenomenological research (Boddy, 2016). Also, a researcher who conducts 10 insightful, well-conducted, and well-documented interviews can yield more detailed information than 50 ill-prepared interviews (Mason, 2010). The quality and rigor of the study was also guaranteed through data saturation, where the researcher continued to sample and analyze the data until no new data appeared and all concepts are well-



developed (Hayashi et al., 2019); preventing inadequate examples and concepts during the development of a theory or analysis (Saunders et al., 2017).

Using purposeful sampling as the criterion strategy and convenience sampling, the population for the present study was Palestinian Muslim Americans in the United States; the participants recruited were those who identify as Palestinian or of Palestinian descent and practice Shafi'I Islam, a branch of Sunni Islam (Webb & Asa'd, 2019). The sample size for present study consisted of 10 adult Palestinian Muslim Americans from Cleveland, Ohio. The criteria established to participate in the study were participants must be over the age of 18 years old, identify as Palestinian or of Palestinian descent, identify as a Muslim, and from Cleveland, Ohio. Participants were required to meet the essential criteria of experiencing the phenomenon being studied, interest in the phenomenon, and willingness to participate in the study (Moustakas, 1994). The consent form included the criteria for participants to be selected as well as information about the researcher's intent to record the interviews (OHRP, 2018).

### **Instrumentation**

The objective of the present study was to recruit 10 willing participants to partake in the study. Data was collected through semistructured face-to-face interviews, which were appropriate for open-ended questions requiring follow-up inquiries (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Follow-up inquiries allow the researcher to apply probing on topics the participants may not have been candid about during the initial interview, and allow researchers "examining uncharted territory with unknown but potential momentous issues" the maximum opportunity to identify useful leads and pursue them (Adams, 2015,

p. 494). The advantages of using semistructured interviews include allowing reciprocity between the participant and the interviewer, allowing the interviewer to improvise the follow-up questions based on the participant's responses, and allowing the participants' own and individual verbal expressions (Kallio et al., 2016). After obtaining permission from the participants, the interviews were audio-taped to ensure all information was captured and body language can be observed and noted by the interviewer.

Semistructured interviews are versatile and flexible forms of data collection; allowing researchers to combine the method with individual and group interview methods, depending on the purpose and research questions of the study, its rigor structure can be varied (Kallio et al., 2016). For the present study, the interview questions were not taken from a published instrument, rather the researcher developed questions that pertain to the research questions (see Appendix A). The questions were reviewed by the content expert and were changed to reflect her feedback. There were no historical or legal documents that were used in the present study. I wrote key notes and responses on an interview protocol or interview guide containing the open-ended interview questions and the outline of the planned topics (see Appendix A), which allowed me to probe for more details about the participant's responses (Adams, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Researcher Developed Instrument**

The present study did not have a pilot study to use as a basis in conducting the study; instead the researcher decided to conduct a qualitative phenomenological study to explore the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans about the tolerance, as well as the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims. Conducting

semistructured interviews and gathering more in-depth data through the interviews allowed me to identify thematic categories relevant to the participants lived experiences (Lien et al., 2014; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Thompson, 2018). The source of knowledge for phenomenological studies is perception obtained directly from the source, the participants, and their own perception (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological study allowed me, the researcher, to ensure all research and interview questions were answered and necessary (Jackson et al., 2018).

To establish the content validity of the interview questions, a content expert was contacted and asked to review the questions. Validity refers to the appropriateness of the processes, tools, and data; it is ensuring that the research questions, the methodology used for answering the research questions, the design of the methodology, and the data analysis, sampling, and context are appropriate for the purpose of the research (Leung, 2015). Once feedback was received, the questions were revised based the content expert's feedback. The process was repeated numerous times until no revisions about the interview questions was needed. Ensuring the validity of a qualitative study refers to obtaining knowledge and understanding of the nature of a phenomenon being studied, which looks for a particular quality typical for the phenomenon or a quality that makes the phenomenon different (Cypress, 2017).

When all interviews were completed and transcribed, member checking was used to ensure all responses were correct and complete. Member checking, also known as respondent validation or participant validation, is the method of returning data or results to participants to check for accuracy and meaning of their experiences (Birt et al., 2016).

The participants had the opportunity to review and clarify their responses, share additional thoughts, and verify that the collected data were correct (Kallio et al., 2016). Member checks help enhance the validity or credibility of the research findings (Thomas, 2017). After member checking and final transcripts were completed, data analysis also ended, and a copy of the final study will be available to participants who request a copy during the study.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Potential participants were recruited by posting flyers or invitations at local Middle Eastern businesses, such as Middle Eastern grocery stores, restaurants, and barbershop who have a high Middle Eastern clientele. The researcher obtained consent and permission from partner organizations before posting any flyers or invitations about the study being conducted. The participants were identified based on their ethnic background (Palestinian American), religious background (Muslim), and the location of their employment, school, or residence to ensure that they are from Cleveland, Ohio. During the recruitment process, I explained to potential participants the purpose of the study and asked for permission to conduct an interview about their lived experiences of the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims. Among the number of potential participants, 10 were selected to participate in the study and informed of the data collection process.

I asked these individuals of their interest or desire to participate through an informed consent. Participants who did not sign the consent form with his or her intent to participate were not included in the study and other potential participants were recruited. Individuals who did not meet the criteria or choose not to participate were thanked for his

or her consideration to participate and no additional contact was made. When 10 participants agreed to participate in the study, the consent form was provided and he or she was given a copy. Each participant was provided a code (e.g. F1, F2,...F5 or M1, M2,...M5) to ensure that any identifying information will remain confidential for 5 years.

Data collection took place in a location that was convenient to the participants, a private conference/meeting room at a local public library. As the researcher, I collected all the data throughout the entirety of the study. The interviews were approximately one hour, which ensured enough time was provided for participants to comfortably answer the interview questions. All data were collected using an audiotape recorder, with each participant's permission, and handwritten notes.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The data collected were analyzed in a private room in my home. During the transcription of the data, I reviewed the audio recordings line by line along with the handwritten notes. The process allowed me to ensure accuracy as well as identify thematic categories that emerged by capturing the rich descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants about the meaning of the phenomenon being studied (Lien et al., 2014; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015). The emerging categories allowed for the evolution of themes to develop, providing the needed focus for the analysis of this study (Terry et al., 2017).

The collected data was coded for specific themes that emerged from the interviews. Once the interviews were completed and the data transcribed, I provided each participant with the transcript of his or her interview with the coded data applied. Each

participant was asked to review the transcript for accuracy; a process described as member checking and helped to strengthen that validity of the research (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To organize and analyze data obtained from the face-to-face interviews, the principles of psychological phenomenological method developed by Giorgi was used. The researcher used microanalysis for all interview responses to ensure that significant concepts or ideas were not overlooked. The collected data about the lived experiences of the participants were analyzed using the Giorgi's methodological steps:

1. Concrete descriptions: raw data of the phenomenon is provided by the participants through interviews
2. Sense of the whole: read the data as a whole, within the attitude of phenomenological reduction, to gain a holistic understanding
3. Meaning units: every transition in meaning from within the attitude focused on the phenomenon is marked
4. Transformations: through free imaginative variation, transform the data into more psychologically relevant expressions
5. Constituents and structure: final expressions from transformations undergo another stage of free imaginative variation; identifying an essential structure of the phenomenon
6. Interpretation of the structure and constituent parts: discuss the findings with relevant existing literature (Giorgi et al., 2017; Jackson et al., 2018).

For this study, the interviews were transcribed allowing me to review for accuracy and code for themes. *Template analysis* was used to code the data and identify specific themes that emerged from the interviews. A template analysis is described as:

a form of thematic analysis which emphasizes the use of hierarchical coding but balances a relatively high degree of structure in the process of analyzing textual data with the flexibility to adapt it to the needs of a particular study. (Brooks et al., 2015, p. 203)

A template analysis allowed me to identify and make sense of the shared or collective meanings and experiences of the participants (Brooks et al., 2015; Terry et al., 2017).

Template analysis also helped me develop more extensive themes which is where the richest data related to the research questions are found (Brooks, et al., 2015). I entered the information in Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word once the data were coded and specific themes were identified. Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word were used to help record, organize, and code data, as well as to develop systematic links between the data. Microsoft Word allowed me to directly transcribe the audio-recorded interviews, helping to facilitate the analysis of data, identify themes, and develop conclusions. Microsoft Excel used to assign codes to texts which allowed me to organize and manage the collected data.

Coding that uses traditional tools such as hand-written notes to support data analysis combined with digital software packages to support data management provide a valid and tested analysis method for qualitative research studies (Maher et al., 2018). Once all the data was coded, I was able to easily retrieve portions of texts through the

created common codes, allowing me to develop relevant themes. As a result, this allowed for the exploration of any patterns in the data and helped begin the conceptualization of the findings.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

The value of a study is said to be strengthened by its trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness is the central concept used to appraise the rigor, which is the degree of thoroughness and accuracy of qualitative studies (Cypress, 2017). For qualitative research to be accepted as trustworthy, the researcher must demonstrate a consistent, precise, and exhaustive analysis of the data; which consists of systematizing, recording, and the disclosure of enough detail about the methods of analysis that allows the reader to determine the credibility of the process (Nowell et al., 2017). In qualitative research, ensuring trustworthiness involves establishing: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Amankwaa, 2016).

### **Credibility**

Credibility is referred to as the confidence in the truth of the study's finding (Amankwaa, 2016). There are a number of techniques that can be used to establish credibility in qualitative studies, but member checking is typically viewed as the most crucial technique (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking refers to the data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions being tested or reviewed by individuals from which the data was originally obtained (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). To ensure the credibility of the present study, I aimed to support the participants by giving them honest and candid information during the interviews.



I also encouraged participants to be as detailed as possible and elaborate on his or her responses that called for extra details (probing). Since the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, member checking helped verify the accuracy of the recordings by providing each participant with a copy of his or her transcribed responses (Birt, et al., 2016). Providing the participants a copy of his or her transcribed responses gave them the opportunity to review and verify their responses for accuracy; while ensuring the responses were what they intended to express during the interviews, therefore ensuring the validity and credibility of the research findings (Thomas, 2017).

### **Transferability**

Transferability is described as the process of demonstrating that findings are applicable in other contexts (Amankwaa, 2016). One strategy commonly used to establish transferability is through thick description, which is a way to achieve external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick description is referred to as the detailed account of experiences where the researcher explicitly creates patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). I provided in-depth and detailed accounts of the participants' lived experiences. The degree of transferability of the findings will be determined by the reader, considering through thick and detailed descriptions judgments can be made about the ability of the findings to be transferred and applied to other situations (Amankwaa, 2016).

### **Dependability**

Dependability is described as the ability to show the findings are consistent and can be repeated by other researchers (Amankwaa, 2016). A technique used to establish

dependability is inquiry audit or external audits (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). An external audit is a process in which a researcher who is not involved in the research process examines the process and the outcome of the present study; helping to determine and evaluate the accuracy of the process, as well as whether the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the collected data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the present study, the chair and second committee member helped with external audits by providing important feedback that may lead to additional data being gathered in order to help develop stronger and better findings (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the degree of neutrality to which the findings are shaped by the participants rather than researcher bias, interest, or motivation (Amankwaa, 2016). An audit trail is one technique used to establish confirmability, which is the transparent description of the steps taken by the researcher from the beginning of the research to the development and reporting of the findings (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Developing an audit trail involves: (a) raw data, (b) data reduction and analysis products, (c) data reconstruction and synthesis products, (d) process notes, (e) materials relating to intentions and dispositions, and (f) instrument development information (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Amankwaa, 2016).

### **Ethical Procedures**

IRB approval was obtained on September 4, 2020 prior to collecting data, the approval number from the IRB was 09-04-20-0508104. Ethical considerations about the interactions with adult participants was based on the Belmont Report and followed the

principles of justice, beneficence, and respect (OHRP, 2018). I attempted to ensure that every potential participant had an equal opportunity to participate in the present study. I also attempted to ensure that all participants understood their rights, felt comfortable, and felt safe. The participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews to ensure that the collected data and information were not misrepresented or misinterpreted, also known as member checking (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Participants were also informed of the voluntary nature of the study through the informed consent, which described that participation was completely optional and they can stop participating at any time (OHRP, 2018). I used bracketing to ensure any personal biases or experiences did not influence the findings from the collected data (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). The audio-recorded interviews and transcripts were also stored in a secure, password-protected computer. Access to the files is limited to me and the computer system remains in a locked room located in my home. Any identifying information about the participants was removed from the data and codes were used as indicators to replace the participants' personal information.

During the process of managing, analyzing, reporting, and presenting the data, I ensured that all data remained protected and confidential for 5 years (OHRP, 2018). Analysis of the data did not begin until all participants verified the transcripts of their interviews and their personal information was removed. Records of the collected data and transcripts were stored under Walden University's strict security guidelines for up to five years and will be destroyed and disposed of after the 5-year timeframe (Walden University, 2019).

## Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance in the state of Ohio. A phenomenological design was used to scientifically study how the phenomena consciously appears to the participants and how the participants interpret them (Moustakas, 1994; as cited in Thompson, 2018). Phenomenological design focuses on generating data that directly explores, analyzes, and describes a specific phenomenon without making any assumptions, while also maximizing the individual's perspective of the experience (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Semistructured, face-to-face interviews were used to collect data about the participants' lived experiences. Also, Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel were used to document, organize, code, and develop systematic links between the data.

In chapter 3 I provided a detailed description of the research design, the methodological procedures of collecting and analyzing data, the role of the researcher, issues about trustworthiness, and the ethical procedures of the study. Chapter 4 briefly reviews the purpose of the study as well as the research question. The chapter also includes a discussion about the setting of the study, the demographics of the participants, the data collection and analysis processes, evidence of trustworthiness, and the findings based on the collected data.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance in the state of Ohio. The study also addressed Simon et al.'s (2018) recommendation to qualitatively explore the tolerance displayed by majority members towards minority members in the United States. Themes that emerged from the data analysis helped to explore Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims. The results from this study could help with the development and implementation of social strategies to improve the social interactions among these groups, while also helping to strengthen the social cohesion among Muslims and non-Muslims (Ellis & Abdi, 2017). The research question guiding this study was as follows: What are Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance?

Chapter 4 describes the setting of the study, the participants' demographics, and the process of data collection. The chapter also provides a description of the data analysis methods as well as information about the methods used to address issues of trustworthiness by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The chapter concludes with a detailed explanation of the results and a final summary.

### **Setting**

Participants for this study were recruited by posting flyers or invitations (see Appendix C) at local Middle Eastern businesses in Cleveland, Ohio who had a high percentage of Middle Eastern clientele. Consent and permission from partner

organizations were obtained prior to posting any flyers or invitations about the study (see Appendix B). Upon agreeing to participate in the study, participants were asked to meet the researcher in a private conference/meeting room at a local public library in Cleveland, to review the consent form and obtain permission to participate in the study. Ten adult Palestinian Muslim American participants were selected (N = 10; n<sub>female</sub> = 5, n<sub>male</sub> = 5); face-to-face semistructured interviews were conducted in a private meeting room at a local public library in Cleveland, Ohio.

### **Demographics**

Ten Palestinian Muslim Americans participated in the study and served as a representative sample for Cleveland, Ohio. The representative sample was chosen because there is limited psychological research on only a few Muslim subgroups, possibly introducing or perpetuating simple-minded stereotypes and generalizations about the entire Muslim community (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). To participate in the study, four criteria had to be met: participants had to (a) be over the age of 18 years old, (b) identify as Palestinian or of Palestinian descent, (c) identify as a Muslim, and (d) be from Cleveland, Ohio. Table 1 lists the participants' demographics.

**Table 1***Participant Demographics*

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

**Data Collection****Participant Recruitment**

As previously mentioned, the participants for this study were recruited by posting flyers or invitations (see Appendix C) at local Middle Eastern businesses who have a high Middle Eastern clientele in Cleveland, Ohio. Also, prior to posting any flyers or invitations, consent and permission was obtained from each partner organization (see Appendix B). A total of 10 participants were recruited and upon agreement to participate, participants were asked to meet the researcher in a private meeting room at a local public library to review and discuss the study in greater detail, as well as to sign and return the consent form. Purposeful criterion sampling was used to recruit and invite potential

participants for the study. The use of purposeful criterion sampling allowed me to recruit participants who meet a preset criterion, which increased the likelihood of choosing participants who possess valuable information relevant to the present study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015; Suri, 2011).

Following IRB approval, participants were recruited, contacted, and invited to meet me at a private meeting room at a local public library to review and sign the consent form. During this pre-interview meeting, the study was discussed in greater detail to ensure each participant understood what is involved to participate in the study before signing the consent form. Participants who did not wish to participate or did not sign the consent form were thanked for his or her consideration and no additional contact was performed. Participants who did not agree to sign the consent form were not included in the study and other participants were recruited and contacted to obtain consent and the targeted sample size; while the participants who signed and returned the consent form received a copy for their records. All participants who were recruited agreed to participate, therefore no further recruitment was needed to reach the target sample size.

### **Semistructured Interviews**

Semistructured, face-to-face interviews were conducted using a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans about the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims in the United States. The interviews were recorded using an audio recording device and hand-written notes on an interview protocol (see Appendix A). The audio recordings were uploaded to a private,



password-protected folder in my personal computer, allowing me to easily access the recordings for transcription.

The duration of the interviews ranged from 4–12 minutes, depending on the how the participant answered the interview questions. Each interview recording was transcribed using my personal, password-protected computer and upon completion of each transcript the participants were asked to review his or her responses for accuracy (member checking). All data were securely stored in my home office, in which all electronic data were stored in a password-protected folder in my personal computer. Any handwritten data and notes were stored in a folder in a locked filing cabinet that is only accessible to me. The data collected for this study will be securely stored for a period of five years and will be destroyed after the five-year period.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using the principles of psychological phenomenological method developed by Giorgi and template analysis. Data were collected from the participants through semistructured face-to-face interviews and were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of responses and transcription. I initially planned to use NVivo to analyze the data, instead Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel were used to manage, organize, and analyze the data.

Once all the data were collected, transcribed, and member checking was conducted for accuracy, I read the raw data in its entirety to gain a holistic understanding of each participant's lived experiences as a Palestinian Muslim American in the United States (Jackson et al., 2018). During the initial analysis, the data were organized into

several tables on Microsoft Excel where each spreadsheet contained different sets of data (i.e., Participant Demographics, Female Participant Experiences, and Male Participant Experiences); which allowed me to synthesize direct quotes from the interviews. Next, significant participant descriptions and meanings were identified, highlighted, and categorized into meaningful units on Microsoft Word (Jackson et al., 2018). The meaningful units were analyzed further to identify and merge relevant similarities, where thematic categories began to emerge. Further analysis of the thematic categories identified the final significant meanings and themes relevant to the study (Jackson et al., 2018).

During the final analysis of the data, common themes emphasized by the participants emerged: (a) Generalizations about Muslims, (b) Participant reaction to interaction with Non-Muslims, and (c) Normal or American lifestyle. Subthemes also emerged from the analysis of the identified themes mentioned, which included:

- a) Generalizations about Muslims
  - i. Verbal attacks
  - ii. Looked at or treated differently
  - iii. The hijab
  - iv. Participant's name
  - v. Ethnicity
  - vi. Lack of education or ignorance
  - vii. Prejudice and discrimination "anywhere" and "everywhere"
- b) Participant reaction to interaction with non-Muslims

- i. Emotional distress
  - ii. Avoidance or ignore them
  - iii. Response to preconceived judgments
  - iv. Good and bad or it depends
  - v. Us vs. them or we vs. they
  - vi. Other responses about tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims
- c) Normal or American lifestyle
- i. Typical daily routine
  - ii. Identifying as American

Further descriptions of the mentioned themes and subthemes is provided in the results section of this chapter (also see Table 5).

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness helped strengthen the value of the study, which was ensured by establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Amankwaa, 2016). Trustworthiness is the degree of thoroughness and accuracy of the study, which was demonstrated through a consistent, precise, and exhaustive analysis of the collected data (Cypress, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017). The trustworthiness of this study was established using several strategies during data collection and analysis.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is defined as establishing the confidence in the truthfulness of the study's findings (Amankwaa, 2016). To establish the credibility of this study, member

checking was used after the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed (Birt et al., 2016). After completing each transcript, each participant was asked to review the transcript of his or her interview to ensure the accuracy of his or her responses. During the interviews, participants were also encouraged to provide in-depth and detailed accounts of their experiences to ensure that no significant or relevant information pertaining to the study will be missed during the analysis.

### **Transferability**

Establishing transferability involves demonstrating the findings are applicable in other contexts (Amankwaa, 2016). To ensure the transferability of this study, thick description was used, which also helped to achieve external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the interviews, each participant was encouraged to provide in-depth and detailed accounts of his or her experiences. Probing was also used during the interviews to obtain more details about questions the participants may not have elaborated on, which can help establish the transferability of the study.

### **Dependability**

Dependability involves establishing the study's findings are consistent and can be repeated by other researchers (Amankwaa, 2016). To establish the dependability of this study, the audio recordings and transcripts were reviewed several times for accuracy. The process of data collection and analysis as well as the process of securing data were also documented to establish the dependability of this study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Finally, the chair and second committee member helped with establishing dependability through

external audits by providing feedback and guidance on developing stronger and better findings (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is the degree of neutrality to which the findings are shaped by the participants (Amankwaa, 2016). To establish the confirmability of this study, an audit trail was used, which involved detailed descriptions of the steps I have taken to conduct this study. The audio recordings of the interviews also helped establish the confirmability of the study. Also, to strengthen the confirmability of this study, reflexivity was used; allowing me to examine and become aware of my own personal experiences and biases. Therefore, bracketing was used during data analysis to ensure that the data were analyzed from an open perspective and not from my own personal biases or opinions (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Results**

The research question guiding this study was: What are Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance? Using a phenomenological study facilitated in exploring and discovering the lived experiences of 10 Palestinian Muslim Americans from Cleveland, Ohio about the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims. Conducting this study also helped to address the gap in the literature proposed by Simon et al. (2018) about the need for future research to qualitatively explore the tolerance displayed by majority members towards minority members in the United States.

The interview questions were developed to address the research question as well as to obtain full, rich, and thick descriptions of the participants' lived experiences,

beliefs, and interpretations about the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims. Qualitative inquiry and data analysis require meticulous attention to the details, descriptions, language, and meanings as well as a profound reflection on the emerging patterns, themes, and meanings of human experience (Saldaña, 2016). Therefore, the thick, rich descriptions of the lived experiences provided by the participants produced several emergent themes and subthemes from the data; giving explanations and meanings of the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans about the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims. Giorgi's principles of psychological phenomenological method and template analysis were used to explore the meanings and patterns that emerged from the participants' in-depth and detailed descriptions of their lived experiences, beliefs, and interpretations about the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims.

### **Theme 1: Generalizations about Muslims**

The theme of "Generalizations about Muslims" was mainly focused on how non-Muslims tend to assume a general perspective of Muslims as a group rather than as separate, individual Muslim members. The participants provided several connections between (a) experiencing verbal attacks, (b) being looked at or treated differently because of their appearance, name, and/or ethnicity, (c) non-Muslims' lack of education or ignorance about Muslims or Islam, and (d) the occurrence of prejudice and discrimination "anywhere" and "everywhere," which emerged as the subthemes (see Table 2).

#### ***Verbal Attacks***

Half of the participants in the study expressed experiencing some form of verbal attack from non-Muslims. Of the five participants, three mentioned experiencing some

form of being told “to go back to your country.” (see Table 2). For example, Participant F2 discussed an incident that occurred at the grocery store with her mother where “a lady literally got in her face and was like, ‘go back to your country, you don’t deserve to be here’.” Participant F5 also discussed similar incidences stating, “every time I go to places, I do get a lot of hate, they tell me to...go back to my country or...stuff like that.” Other forms of verbal attacks were also mentioned by other participants, such as Participant M1 who described experiencing verbal attacks when he was younger from non-Muslims because he was proud of where he came from and being a Muslim, stating, “I’ve heard every joke you can think of. I’ve been teased...about it” (see Table 2).

### ***Looked at or Treated Differently***

A total of nine participants provided details of experiencing or observing being looked at or treated differently based on their appearance, name, and/or ethnicity. In general, five participants discussed personally experiencing being looked at or treated differently (see Table 2). For example, Participant M3 stated, “They look at you differently, they talk to you differently, and they basically get scared of you, they think you’re gonna do something, it seems like you’re from outer space.” Participant M2 also mentioned, “Anytime I pray I feel that a lot of people look at me differently” and when asked how it made him feel, he responded, “Hatred...unwanted, people just look at you differently” (see Table 2).

**Appearance – The Hijab.** Of the nine participants, six participants specifically mentioned experiencing or observing prejudice and discrimination because of the hijab. For example, although she did not personally experience any prejudice and

discrimination herself, Participant F3 discussed observing prejudice and discrimination experienced by other Muslim women, “they get discriminated just from wearing the headscarf and it’s truly sickening” (see Table 2). Similarly, Participant M2 also discussed observing hijab-wearing Muslim women experiencing prejudice and discrimination stating, “our Muslim sisters... [who have] the hijab on...there’s a lot of people that say smart remarks. There’s a lot of people that...asks stupid questions about it, why they wear it.” Participant M5 also discussed similar occurrences at airports stating, “going through the airport ...you’re with family that’s wearing the hijab, they tend to look at you in scrutiny and search you a lot longer” (see Table 2).

**Name.** Two of the nine participants mentioned experiencing being looked at or treated differently because of their name. During the interview, Participant M3 discussed that he is treated differently by non-Muslims not because of his looks, but because of his name. He stated, “It’s not even my looks, basically my name...once they see that I get treated differently, they act differently, they treat you differently overall just different completely.” A similar incident was discussed by Participant M4 who stated, “I went to Starbucks...they didn’t wanna serve me...they told me because of my name, because I’m Arab” (see Table 2).

**Ethnicity.** In general, of the nine participants who mentioned experiencing or observing prejudice and discrimination, three participants mentioned experiencing prejudice and discrimination because of their ethnicity, while four discussed encountering these experiences because they were speaking Arabic in public (see Table 2). Participant F1 stated, “they don’t think I’m Arabic...I have to correct them and say, ‘No I’m



Palestinian' and that's when the whole thing starts...I get that a lot when they find out that I'm Arabic." During the interview she also described, "I was in a cab and I had gotten a call...he asked me, 'What language was that?' I told him 'Arabic'...he was like, 'Oh so you're one of them?'" Participant F4 discussed a similar experience about an incident while shopping at a grocery store where she was talking on the phone and a woman walked up to her and "she said to me, 'You're in America, speak English' and walked away." Participant M3 also described experiencing similar incidences where, "you start speaking a different language they look at you like you're going to do something or...starting to do something or trying to do something" (see Table 2).

### ***Lack of Education or Ignorance***

When the participants were asked why they thought these incidences occurred the most, five participants specifically mentioned lack of education or ignorance and one participant (Participant M4) mentioned, "To be honest with you, I don't know. That's how it is" (see Table 2). For example, Participant F3 stated, "I think they're just going based...off their opinions and not actual knowledge or what Islam is about." Participant F5 also stated, "I don't know, I would say they do it out of ignorance. They don't know any better, I guess, or they don't wanna know any better." Similarly, when asked about the cab driver's comment of, "Oh, so you're one of them," Participant F1 stated, "He wasn't educated enough to know that we're not like that" (see Table 2).

**Social Media or News.** Two participants who discussed why they thought these incidences occurred the most specifically mentioned the portrayal of Muslims by social media and the news outlets. Participant F2 stated, "they just come up with stories they

hear from the news and social media...they take that and they automatically make you into that person they think you are without knowing exactly who you are” and continued by stating, “they think...you’re a terrorist just because you come from a background whatever social media feeds them.” Similarly, Participant M3 stated, “Ignorance. To be honest, the media. The way the media portray us as Arabs and Muslims in general.” He continued by stating, “I think...the media portrays us really bad...basically they don’t know a lot about the religion, they don’t have knowledge of our religion. They only know what the media portrays for them” (see Table 2).

***Prejudice and Discrimination “Anywhere” and “Everywhere”***

When participants were asked about the occurrence of prejudice and discrimination, four specifically mentioned that it occurs “anywhere” or “everywhere”; while another four specifically mentioned different locations (see Table 2). During the interview Participant F2 stated, “Honestly, anywhere you go nowadays. It doesn’t matter where you are, whether you’re at school, whether you’re at work, whether you’re in the grocery store.” Participant F4 expressed a similar view stating, “It’s normal now, you want the truth, it’s normal. This is not the first, it’s probably not going to be the last...it’s anywhere...there isn’t one setting” Also, Participant M4 discussed the occurrence of his own experiences stating, “Everywhere, everywhere, everywhere. I’ve experienced it everywhere.” (see Table 2).

**Specified Places.** Although four participants did not specifically state the occurrences are “anywhere” and “everywhere”, it is worth noting that based on their descriptions it can be implied that such incidences can occur wherever they go. For

example, Participant M5 stated, “racism in this country is alive and well...happens at work a lot...The airport is one...in a more affluent neighborhood...restaurants.”

Similarly, Participant F1 said, “at the dentist office, at the gym...it’s where I’m at. That’s where they see me” and Participant M2 stated, “I’ve seen it in schools, with schools the most...kids bullying other kids. Out in the public...even being at the barber shop” (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Generalizations about Muslims*

Subthemes	Participant Responses
Verbal attacks	<p>“a lady literally got in her face and was like, ‘go back to your country, you don’t deserve to be here’.”</p> <p>“[she said], ‘you Arabs, you Arabs are animals you don’t know how to take care of your kids’... ‘your kind, your kind, you’re garbage’...’get out of here, go back to where you came from’...”</p> <p>“...she said to me, ‘You’re in America, speak English’ and walked away.”</p> <p>“he was cussing me out and throwing stuff at me, telling me to go back to my country.”</p> <p>“every time I go to places, I do get a lot of hate, they tell me to...go back to my country or...stuff like that.”</p> <p>“He was like, ‘Oh so you’re one of them...you guys are the ones that are blowing up things and terrorizing...you never know’.”</p> <p>“I’ve heard every joke you can think of. I’ve been teased...about it.”</p>

Subthemes	Participant Responses
Looked at or treated differently	<p>“People kind of look at you differently.”</p> <p>“Anytime I pray I feel that a lot of people look at me differently.”</p> <p>“Hatred...unwanted, people just look at you differently.”</p> <p>“they look at me weird, they treat me differently, they act differently because of my first name and my last name.”</p> <p>“They look at you differently, they talk to you differently, and they basically get scared of you, they think you’re gonna do something, it seems like you’re from outer space.”</p> <p>“I went to Starbucks...they didn’t wanna serve me...they told me because of my name, because I’m Arab.”</p> <p>“I went to a store and... just the fact that I was Arabic and Muslim...the cashier told me that 'I don’t serve your kind of people.'”</p> <p>“going through the airport they see you speaking Arabic or...you’re with family that’s wearing the hijab, they tend to look at you in scrutiny and search you a lot longer...basically they search you a lot longer and start asking you more questions than they would ask other people.”</p> <p>“I’ve seen the worst of the worst in other people...it’s truly sickening.”</p>
The hijab	<p>“I wear the hijab...anytime I would go anywhere...A lot of people would look at us very differently and we would get a lot of negative feedbacks.”</p> <p>“a lady literally got in her face and was like, ‘go back to your country, you don’t deserve to be here’ and yanked my mother’s hijab off of her.”</p> <p>“they get discriminated just from wearing the headscarf and it’s truly sickening.”</p> <p>“This is normal...because of my hijab, you wanna automatically assume I don’t speak English or I’m a foreigner.”</p> <p>“I was walking home from school...I used to wear the hijab...a...man...flips me off...and he was cussing me out and throwing stuff at me, telling me to go back to my country.”</p> <p>“our Muslim sisters... [who have] the hijab on...there’s a lot of people that say smart remarks. There’s a lot of people that...asks stupid questions about it, why they wear it.”</p> <p>“going through the airport ...you’re with family that’s wearing the hijab, they tend to look at you in scrutiny and search you a lot longer.”</p>
Participant’s name	<p>“It’s not even my looks, basically my name...once they see that I get treated differently, they act differently, they treat you differently overall just different completely.”</p> <p>“I went to Starbucks...they didn’t wanna serve me...they told me because of my name, because I’m Arab.”</p>

Subthemes	Participant Responses
Ethnicity	<p>“they don’t think I’m Arabic...I have to correct them and say, ‘No I’m Palestinian’ and that’s when the whole thing starts...I get that a lot when they find out that I’m Arabic.”</p> <p>“people look at you differently because of where you’re from.”</p> <p>“I went to a store and... just the fact that I was Arabic and Muslim...the cashier told me that ‘I don’t serve your kind of people.’”</p> <p>“I was in a cab and I had gotten a call...he asked me, ‘What language was that?’ I told him ‘Arabic’...he was like, ‘Oh so you’re one of them?’”</p> <p>“she said to me, ‘You’re in America, speak English’ and walked away.”</p> <p>“you start speaking a different language they look at you like you’re going to do something or...starting to do something or trying to do something.”</p> <p>“going through the airport they see you speaking Arabic...basically they search you a lot longer and start asking you more questions than they would ask other people.”</p>
Lack of education or ignorance	<p>“He wasn’t educated enough to know that we’re not like that.”</p> <p>“I think they’re just going based...off their opinions and not actual knowledge or what Islam is about.”</p> <p>“I don’t know, I would say they do it out of ignorance. They don’t know any better, I guess, or they don’t wanna know any better.”</p> <p>“it sucks that we live in a world where...it’s racist...It really is.”</p> <p>“To be honest with you, I don’t know. That’s how it is.”</p> <p>“they just come up with stories they hear from the news and social media...they take that and they automatically make you into that person they think you are without knowing exactly who you are.”</p> <p>“they think...you’re a terrorist just because you come from a background whatever social media feeds them.”</p> <p>“Ignorance. To be honest, the media. The way the media portray us as Arabs and Muslims in general.”</p> <p>“I think...the media portray us really bad...basically they don’t know a lot about the religion, they don’t have knowledge of our religion. They only know what the media portrays for them.”</p>

Subthemes	Participant Responses
Prejudice and discrimination “anywhere” and “everywhere”	<p>“Honestly, anywhere you go nowadays. It doesn’t matter where you are, whether you’re at school, whether you’re at work, whether you’re in the grocery store.”</p> <p>“It’s normal now, you want the truth, it’s normal. This is not the first, it’s probably not going to be the last...it’s anywhere...there isn’t one setting”</p> <p>“Honestly, it happens all over. It doesn’t have a specific area, as soon as they see I wear a hijab there’s usually somebody that has to say something smart.”</p> <p>“Everywhere, everywhere, everywhere. I’ve experienced it everywhere.”</p>
Specified places	<p>“I’ve seen it in schools, with schools the most...kids bullying other kids. Out in the public...even being at the barber shop.”</p> <p>“Discrimination, I usually saw it when I was up north in the country like [in] Maine... the community is mainly White and when they see somebody that is not White.”</p> <p>“racism in this country is alive and well...happens at work a lot...The airport is one...in a more affluent neighborhood...restaurants.”</p>

## Theme 2: Participant Reaction to Interaction with Non-Muslims

The “Participant reaction to interaction with non-Muslims” theme was mainly focused on the participants’ reactions or responses to their interactions with non-Muslims. The participants provided significant associations and connections between (a) emotional distress, (b) avoidance or ignoring them, (c) responding to non-Muslims’ preconceived judgments, (d) the tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims is “good and bad” or “it depends”, and (e) the concepts of “us vs. them” or “we vs. they,” which emerged as the subthemes (see Table 3).

### ***Emotional Distress***

When participants were asked how their experiences made them feel, eight out of the 10 participants expressed a form of emotional distress. For example, Participant F1 described her experience with the cab driver as “It made me feel unsafe...It hurt me... It made me sick” and when she described how she felt after an incident with a woman asking her about Jesus and being verbally attacked, she stated, “I was actually just stunned, confused...I didn’t know how to react... I didn’t know what to feel” (see Table 3). Participant F5 expressed a similar reaction about the incident where a man threw stuff and shouted profanities at her stating, “I didn’t know what I did wrong and I just went home...that traumatized me to this day.”

She continued by stating, “I’m traumatized. I had to take off my hijab the next day...I honestly was too scared to even walk home by myself. I quit cosmetology...until this day honestly I just don’t walk by myself anymore.” Participant M2 also described experiencing some form of emotional distress saying, “Uncomfortable...looked at different or...didn’t belong here, didn’t feel wanted.” Similarly, Participant M5 stated, “Violated...violated, not trusted, ashamed to be an American” (see Table 3).

### ***Avoidance or Ignore Them***

Three participants also mentioned simply avoiding or ignoring non-Muslims. For example, although Participant M5 felt “violated” he also stated, “Honestly, I really don’t take it to heart...I’m the type of person that I try not to let it bother me” (see Table 3). Participant M1 stated similar views saying, “I never took it personal...for me...it was just

always ‘kill them with kindness’.” While Participant F5 said, “I just ignore them. I just move along with the day. I just try not to get involved with them” (see Table 3).

***Response to Preconceived Judgments***

Although the participants were not directly asked about non-Muslims’ generalized views about Muslims, five participants mentioned non-Muslims’ preconceived judgments about Muslims. For example, Participant F3 stated, “I feel like if people actually learned about Islam and learned about what it teaches us and learned about how Muslims are raised, it would really open the eyes of people that judge and mistreat us” (see Table 3). Similarly, Participant M2 also stated, “our religion is the same as everybody else’s religion, our beliefs is the same as everybody else’s beliefs so we shouldn’t be looked different for what we are and what we believe in.” Of the participants mentioning preconceived judgments, Participant F2 provided a general idea of what the participants believed,

don’t judge the book by its cover...give the person a chance, hear them out, meet them as a person, not as where they’re coming from or what they think that person is like another Muslim or non-Muslim...everyone deserves their chance to be able to show themselves as a person that they are, not as what was being said to them or what bad experience they’ve had with one another. (see Table 3)

***“Good and Bad” or “It Depends”***

The participants were also asked how they felt about the tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims. Four out of the 10 participants stated it was “good and bad” or “it depends” (see Table 3). For example, Participant F4 stated,



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

Similarly, Participant M3 stated, "It's been good and bad...me being as a Palestinian, a lot of Americans know the struggle we've been through and they stand by us and some of them it's bad, depending on how you look at it" (see Table 3).

***"Us vs. Them" or "We vs. They"***

When the participants were asked about the tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims, four of the participants expressed their views in terms of "Us vs. them" or "we vs. they" (see Table 3). For example, Participant F1 stated,

Muslims tolerate a lot. We're more passive when it comes to this kind of things. We don't blame anybody for us. We just think that they're less educated when it comes to us. We don't get mad about it. The other part, on the other hand, they get angry because they think that we are the ones who are closed-minded but the matter of fact is because they're not taking the time to educate themselves and...some of them...don't want to educate themselves. It might be because they just don't want to or they're just too lazy to learn about other religion[s]...I think they don't tolerate us because of them.

Participant M2 also provided a similar description of the tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims stating,

non-Muslims, some of them look at us differently. I feel like some of them try taking things out on you and try...to feel you out...Seeing if you really are religious or if you are not...they'll ask questions or try to influence you into things you shouldn't...I think people try to test you. (see Table 3)

**Other Responses about Tolerance Among Muslims and Non-Muslims.**

Although this may not be considered as a subtheme, it is worth mentioning since it provided relevant comparisons of opposing views from two participants about the tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims. When asked how she felt about the tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims, Participant F4 stated "I don't think it's ever gonna change...what's going on in the world...it's unfortunate. People understand differences...everybody tolerates what they wanna tolerate, what they choose to tolerate." On the contrary, Participant M3 stated,

but,...if you have a neighbor that's non-Muslim...and he knows you personally he knows what kind of character you are and how you practice your religion; they know what the religion is as a whole they cannot pinpoint '...just because this person did this, everybody in the religion or the religion as a whole are bad.'(see Table 3)

**Table 3***Participant Reaction to Interaction with Non-Muslims*

Subthemes	Participant Responses
Emotional distress	“It made me feel unsafe...It hurt me... It made me sick.”
	“I was actually just stunned, confused...I didn’t know how to react... I didn’t know what to feel.”
	“I was angry, I was upset, I was very surprised more than anything.”
	“My hijab does not in any way say who I am as a person...It’s normal now. You anticipate it at this point, to be honest.”
	“I didn’t know what I did wrong and I just went home...that traumatized me to this day.”
	“I’m traumatized. I had to take off my hijab the next day...I honestly was too scared to even walk home by myself. I quit cosmetology...until this day honestly I just don’t walk by myself anymore.”
	“I just don’t leave anywhere as much as long as it’s with my husband.”
	“Uncomfortable...looked at different or...didn’t belong here, didn’t feel wanted.”
	“Sad and to be honest like ashamed because the people that treat you that way are also minority just like me.”
	“[that led to an] altercation.”
	“it made me feel really bad...it made me feel really sad.”
	“I really got offended there.”
	“I feel bad. I feel sad.”
“Violated...violated, not trusted, ashamed to be an American.”	
Avoidance or ignore them	“I just ignore them.”
	“I just ignore them. I just move along with the day. I just try not to get involved with them.”
	“I never took it personal...for me...it was just always ‘kill them with kindness’.”
	“Honestly, I really don’t take it to heart...I’m the type of person that I try not to let it bother me.”

## Subthemes

## Participant Responses

Response to  
preconceived  
judgments

“don’t judge the book by its cover...give the person a chance, hear them out, meet them as a person, not as where they’re coming from or what they think that person is like another Muslim or non-Muslim...everyone deserves their chance to be able to show themselves as a person that they are, not as what was being said to them or what bad experience they’ve had with one another.”

“I feel like if people actually learned about Islam and learned about what it teaches us and learned about how Muslims are raised, it would really open the eyes of people that judge and mistreat us.”

“our religion is the same as everybody else’s religion, our beliefs is the same as everybody else’s beliefs so we shouldn’t be looked different for what we are and what we believe in.”

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

“We’re all the same...we all bleed the same color...It doesn’t have to be that way.”

“why do we have to go through this...we all the same.”

“living in this country, nobody should go through that.”

Good and bad or it  
depends

“you have some people out there that are amazing, they just come up to you and have a normal conversation and treat you as if you’re not any different...and you have the ones that just automatically see a Palestinian...or whatever it is and just automatically drive by you and flip you off or try to harass you for it.”

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

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

“It’s been good and bad...me being as a Palestinian, a lot of Americans know the struggle we’ve been through and they stand by us and some of them it’s bad, depending on how you look at it.”

Subthemes	Participant Responses
Us vs. them or we vs. they	<p>“Muslims tolerate a lot. We’re more passive when it comes to this kind of things. We don’t blame anybody for us. We just think that they’re less educated when it comes to us. We don’t get mad about it. The other part, on the other hand, they get angry because they think that we are the ones who are closed-minded but the matter of fact is because they’re not taking the time to educate themselves and...some of them...don’t want to educate themselves. It might be because they just don’t want to or they’re just too lazy to learn about other religion[s]...I think they don’t tolerate us because of them.”</p> <p>“if it’s very clear they’re Muslim, people don’t hold back. It’s like they have no fear of being rude or hurting somebody’s feelings or it’s like you have no guilty conscience, it’s really sad.”</p> <p>“non-Muslims, some of them look at us differently. I feel like some of them try taking things out on you and try...to feel you out...Seeing if you really are religious or if you are not...they’ll ask questions or try to influence you into things you shouldn’t...I think people try to test you.”</p> <p>“I think Muslims have more patience...Because of their faith, but that can be challenged sometimes...I just think we have more patience.”</p>
Other responses about tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims	<p>“I don’t think it’s ever gonna change...what’s going on in the world...it’s unfortunate. People understand differences...everybody tolerates what they wanna tolerate, what they choose to tolerate.”</p> <p>“if you have a neighbor that’s non-Muslim...and he knows you personally he knows what kind of character you are and how you practice your religion; they know what the religion is as a whole they cannot pinpoint ‘...just because this person did this, everybody in the religion or the religion as a whole are bad.’”</p>

### Theme 3: Normal or American Lifestyle

The theme “Normal or American lifestyle” was mainly focused on the participants’ self-proclaimed “normal” or “American” way of life. Participants were asked to describe activities they experience throughout their day. As a result, the

participants expressed connections with (a) typical daily routines and (b) identifying as American which emerged as subthemes (see Table 4).

### ***Typical Daily Routine***

When the participants were asked to describe activities, they experience throughout their day, eight out of the 10 described their normal daily routines. For example, Participant F3 stated,

I'm pretty much a stay at home kind of person I wake up, I clean up, I cook, I get everything done that needs to be done in the house, take care of my siblings, see if my mom is good.

Participant M3 also described his typical daily routine stating, "I get up, go to work, say 'hello' to my neighbors, go to the office, see clients, do my errands, go to the post office, the bank, you know things like that. That's my regular errands" (see Table 4). Participant F4 described a similar routine, saying,

I'm a boring person to be honest with you. I run errands, the post office, grocery shopping, I'll take my kids to the park, grab a cup of coffee, you know typical home things, you know housework, cleaning, hanging out with my kids, family members.

### ***Identifying as American***

Three of the 10 participants mentioned identifying as an American during the interviews (see Table 4). For example, during her interview Participant F2 stated, "I feel like any American, I was born and raised here." Participant M3 also expressed similar

views stating, “I consider myself as more of an American than anything else.” Also,

Participant M2 described how it feels to live in the United States saying,

here in the United States...you can do whatever you want...me being...Muslim American...showing my religion and my beliefs here is normal. It makes you feel good, it makes you...show people that we are pretty much the same as everybody else, we're not different. (see Table 4)

**Table 4**

*Normal or American Lifestyle*

Subthemes	Participant Responses
Typical daily routine	<p>“I live my life normal. I eat like them...My kids go to school just like their kids...we go to the park the way they do.”</p> <p>“I go to the gym, I work out... I take my kids to the splash park, just a typical American day...That’s about it...we sit and eat for pizza. There are times we go kayaking, rock climbing.”</p> <p>“I’m pretty much a stay at home kind of person I wake up, I clean up, I cook, I get everything done that needs to be done in the house, take care of my siblings, see if my mom is good.”</p> <p>“I’m a boring person to be honest with you. I run errands, the post office, grocery shopping, I’ll take my kids to the park, grab a cup of coffee, you know typical home things, you know housework, cleaning, hanging out with my kids, family members.”</p> <p>“I go to work...and go home. That’s pretty much it.”</p> <p>“play sports, I hang out with my family a lot, go to the park, I take the kids everywhere, go have...breakfast, go have lunch or dinner...what a normal family would do.”</p> <p>“I get up, go to work, say 'hello' to my neighbors, go to the office, see clients, do my errands, go to the post office, the bank, you know things like that. That’s my regular errands.”</p> <p>“I wake up, I go to work and... that’s pretty much it.”</p>

Subthemes	Participant Responses
Typical daily routine	“My typical day is exercising, going to work for about 6 to 7 hours, listening to music, watching sports...that’s pretty much my typical day. Work, exercising, laughing, chilling with friends and family.”
Identifying as American	<p>“I feel like any American, I was born and raised here...”</p> <p>“here in the United States...you can do whatever you want...me being...Muslim American...showing my religion and my beliefs here is normal. It makes you feel good, it makes you...show people that we are pretty much the same as everybody else, we’re not different.”</p> <p>“I consider myself as more of an American than anything else.”</p>

**Table 5***Themes, Subthemes, and Examples Resulting from Analysis*

Themes	Subthemes	Participant Responses
Generalization about Muslims	Verbal attacks	<p>“a lady literally got in her face and was like, ‘go back to your country, you don’t deserve to be here’.”</p> <p>“[she said], ‘you Arabs, you Arabs are animals you don’t know how to take care of your kids’... ‘your kind, your kind, you’re garbage’... ‘get out of here, go back to where you came from’.”</p> <p>“she said to me, ‘You’re in America, speak English’ and walked away.”</p> <p>“he was cussing me out and throwing stuff at me, telling me to go back to my country.”</p> <p>“every time I go to places, I do get a lot of hate, they tell me to...go back to my country or...stuff like that.”</p> <p>“He was like, ‘Oh so you’re one of them...you guys are the ones that are blowing up things and terrorizing...you never know’.”</p> <p>“I’ve heard every joke you can think of. I’ve been teased...about it.”</p>



Themes	Subthemes	Participant Responses
Generalization about Muslims	Looked at or treated differently	<p>“People kind of look at you differently.”</p> <p>“Anytime I pray I feel that a lot of people look at me differently.”</p> <p>“Hatred...unwanted, people just look at you differently.”</p> <p>“they look at me weird, they treat me differently, they act differently because of my first name and my last name.”</p> <p>“They look at you differently, they talk to you differently, and they basically get scared of you, they think you’re gonna do something, it seems like you’re from outer space.”</p> <p>“I went to Starbucks...they didn’t wanna serve me...they told me because of my name, because I’m Arab.”</p> <p>“I went to a store and... just the fact that I was Arabic and Muslim...the cashier told me that ‘I don’t serve your kind of people.’”</p> <p>“going through the airport they see you speaking Arabic or...you’re with family that’s wearing the hijab, they tend to look at you in scrutiny and search you a lot longer...basically they search you a lot longer and start asking you more questions than they would ask other people.”</p> <p>“I’ve seen the worst of the worst in other people...it’s truly sickening.”</p>
	The hijab	<p>“I wear the hijab...anytime I would go anywhere...A lot of people would look at us very differently and we would get a lot of negative feedbacks.”</p> <p>“a lady literally got in her face and was like, ‘go back to your country, you don’t deserve to be here’ and yanked my mother’s hijab off of her.”</p> <p>“they get discriminated just from wearing the headscarf and it’s truly sickening.”</p> <p>“This is normal...because of my hijab, you wanna automatically assume I don’t speak English or I’m a foreigner.”</p>

Themes	Subthemes	Participant Responses
Generalization about Muslims	The hijab	<p>“I was walking home from school...I used to wear the hijab...a...man...flips me off...and he was cussing me out and throwing stuff at me, telling me to go back to my country.”</p> <p>“our Muslim sisters... [who have] the hijab on...there’s a lot of people that say smart remarks. There’s a lot of people that...asks stupid questions about it, why they wear it.”</p> <p>...going through the airport ...you’re with family that’s wearing the hijab, they tend to look at you in scrutiny and search you a lot longer.”</p>
	Participant’s name	<p>“It’s not even my looks, basically my name...once they see that I get treated differently, they act differently, they treat you differently overall just different completely.”</p> <p>“I went to Starbucks...they didn’t wanna serve me...they told me because of my name, because I’m Arab.”</p>
	Ethnicity	<p>“they don’t think I’m Arabic...I have to correct them and say, ‘No I’m Palestinian’ and that’s when the whole thing starts...I get that a lot when they find out that I’m Arabic.”</p> <p>“people look at you differently because of where you’re from.”</p> <p>“I went to a store and... just the fact that I was Arabic and Muslim...the cashier told me that ‘I don’t serve your kind of people.’.”</p> <p>“I was in a cab and I had gotten a call...he asked me, ‘What language was that?’ I told him ‘Arabic’...he was like, ‘Oh so you’re one of them?’.”</p> <p>“she said to me, ‘You’re in America, speak English’ and walked away.”</p> <p>“you start speaking a different language they look at you like you’re going to do something or...starting to do something or trying to do something.”</p> <p>“going through the airport they see you speaking Arabic...basically they search you a lot longer and start asking you more questions than they would ask other people.”</p>

Themes	Subthemes	Participant Responses
Generalization about Muslims	Lack of education or ignorance	<p>“He wasn’t educated enough to know that we’re not like that.”</p> <p>“I think they’re just going based...off their opinions and not actual knowledge or what Islam is about.”</p> <p>“I don’t know, I would say they do it out of ignorance. They don’t know any better, I guess, or they don’t wanna know any better.”</p> <p>“it sucks that we live in a world where...it’s racist...It really is.”</p> <p>“To be honest with you, I don’t know. That’s how it is.”</p> <p>“they just come up with stories they hear from the news and social media...they take that and they automatically make you into that person they think you are without knowing exactly who you are.”</p> <p>“they think...you’re a terrorist just because you come from a background whatever social media feeds them.”</p> <p>“Ignorance. To be honest, the media. The way the media portray us as Arabs and Muslims in general.”</p> <p>“I think...the media portray us really bad...basically they don’t know a lot about the religion, they don’t have knowledge of our religion. They only know what the media portrays for them.”</p>
	Prejudice and discrimination “anywhere” and “everywhere”	<p>“Honestly, anywhere you go nowadays. It doesn’t matter where you are, whether you’re at school, whether you’re at work, whether you’re in the grocery store.”</p> <p>“It’s normal now, you want the truth, it’s normal. This is not the first, it’s probably not going to be the last...it’s anywhere...there isn’t one setting.”</p> <p>“Honestly, it happens all over. It doesn’t have a specific area, as soon as they see I wear a hijab there’s usually somebody that has to say something smart.”</p> <p>“Everywhere, everywhere, everywhere. I’ve experienced it everywhere.”</p>

Themes	Subthemes	Participant Responses
Generalization about Muslims	Specified places	<p>“at the dentist office, at the gym...it’s where I’m at. That’s where they see me.”</p>
		<p>“I’ve seen it in schools, with schools the most...kids bullying other kids. Out in the public...even being at the barber shop.”</p> <p>“Discrimination, I usually saw it when I was up north in the country like [in] Maine... the community is mainly White and when they see somebody that is not White.”</p> <p>“racism in this country is alive and well...happens at work a lot...The airport is one...in a more affluent neighborhood...restaurants.”</p>
Participant reaction to interaction with non-Muslims	Emotional distress	<p>“It made me feel unsafe...It hurt me... It made me sick.”</p>
		<p>“I was actually just stunned, confused...I didn’t know how to react... I didn’t know what to feel.”</p> <p>“I was angry, I was upset, I was very surprised more than anything.”</p> <p>“My hijab does not in any way say who I am as a person...It’s normal now. You anticipate it at this point, to be honest.”</p> <p>“I didn’t know what I did wrong and I just went home...that traumatized me to this day.”</p> <p>“I’m traumatized. I had to take off my hijab the next day...I honestly was too scared to even walk home by myself. I quit cosmetology...until this day honestly I just don’t walk by myself anymore.”</p> <p>“I just don’t leave anywhere as much as long as it’s with my husband.”</p> <p>“Uncomfortable...looked at different or...didn’t belong here, didn’t feel wanted.”</p> <p>“Sad and to be honest like ashamed because the people that treat you that way are also minority just like me.”</p> <p>“[that led to an] altercation.”</p> <p>“it made me feel really bad...it made me feel really sad.”</p> <p>“I really got offended there.”</p> <p>“I feel bad. I feel sad”</p>

Themes	Subthemes	Participant Responses
Participant reaction to interaction with non-Muslims	Emotional distress	“Violated...violated, not trusted, ashamed to be an American.”
	Avoidance or ignore them	<p>“I just ignore them.”</p> <p>“I just ignore them. I just move along with the day. I just try not to get involved with them.”</p> <p>“I never took it personal...for me...it was just always ‘kill them with kindness’.”</p> <p>“Honestly, I really don’t take it to heart...I’m the type of person that I try not to let it bother me.”</p>
	Response to preconceived judgments	<p>“don’t judge the book by its cover...give the person a chance, hear them out, meet them as a person, not as where they’re coming from or what they think that person is like another Muslim or non-Muslim...everyone deserves their chance to be able to show themselves as a person that they are, not as what was being said to them or what bad experience they’ve had with one another.”</p> <p>“I feel like if people actually learned about Islam and learned about what it teaches us and learned about how Muslims are raised, it would really open the eyes of people that judge and mistreat us.”</p> <p>“our religion is the same as everybody else’s religion, our beliefs is the same as everybody else’s beliefs so we shouldn’t be looked different for what we are and what we believe in.”</p> <p>“I feel like everybody should be nice to one another, respect one another, whether you’re Muslim or non-Muslim and everybody be treated equally...if you do have smart remarks or anything to say, keep it to yourself...”</p> <p>“We’re all the same...we all bleed the same color...It doesn’t have to be that way.”</p> <p>“why do we have to go through this...we all the same.”</p> <p>“living in this country, nobody should go through that.”</p>

Themes	Subthemes	Participant Responses
Participant reaction to interaction with non-Muslims	Good and bad or it depends	<p>“you have some people out there that are amazing, they just come up to you and have a normal conversation and treat you as if you’re not any different...and you have the ones that just automatically see a Palestinian...or whatever it is and just automatically drive by you and flip you off or try to harass you for it.”</p> <p>“it depends on the situation. There are times where...we could be somewhere and...meet someone and just strikes up a conversation with me, it’s pretty cool...then you can go somewhere and you can feel it’s an uncomfortable situation...not every situation is the same and not every area that you happen to be is the same.”</p> <p>“I guess it’s not that bad, it depends on where you live too.”</p> <p>“It’s been good and bad...me being as a Palestinian, a lot of Americans know the struggle we’ve been through and they stand by us and some of them it’s bad, depending on how you look at it.”</p>
	Us vs. them or we vs. they	<p>“Muslims tolerate a lot. We’re more passive when it comes to this kind of things. We don’t blame anybody for us. We just think that they’re less educated when it comes to us. We don’t get mad about it. The other part, on the other hand, they get angry because they think that we are the ones who are closed-minded but the matter of fact is because they’re not taking the time to educate themselves and...some of them...don’t want to educate themselves. It might be because they just don’t want to or they’re just too lazy to learn about other religion[s]...I think they don’t tolerate us because of them.”</p> <p>“if it’s very clear they’re Muslim, people don’t hold back. It’s like they have no fear of being rude or hurting somebody’s feelings or it’s like you have no guilty conscience, it’s really sad.”</p>

Themes	Subthemes	Participant Responses
Participant reaction to interaction with non-Muslims	Us vs. them or we vs. they	<p>“non-Muslims, some of them look at us differently. I feel like some of them try taking things out on you and try...to feel you out...Seeing if you really are religious or if you are not...they’ll ask questions or try to influence you into things you shouldn’t...I think people try to test you.”</p> <p>“I think Muslims have more patience...Because of their faith, but that can be challenged sometimes...I just think we have more patience.”</p>
	Other responses about tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims	<p>“I don’t think it’s ever gonna change...what’s going on in the world...it’s unfortunate. People understand differences...everybody tolerates what they wanna tolerate, what they choose to tolerate.”</p> <p>“if you have a neighbor that’s non-Muslim...and he knows you personally he knows what kind of character you are and how you practice your religion; they know what the religion is as a whole they cannot pinpoint ‘...just because this person did this, everybody in the religion or the religion as a whole are bad.’”</p>
Normal or American lifestyle	Typical daily routine	<p>“I live my life normal. I eat like them...My kids go to school just like their kids...we go to the park the way they do.”</p> <p>“I go to the gym, I work out... I take my kids to the splash park, just a typical American day...That’s about it...we sit and eat for pizza. There are times we go kayaking, rock climbing.”</p> <p>“I’m pretty much a stay at home kind of person I wake up, I clean up, I cook, I get everything done that needs to be done in the house, take care of my siblings, see if my mom is good.”</p> <p>“I’m a boring person to be honest with you. I run errands, the post office, grocery shopping, I’ll take my kids to the park, grab a cup of coffee, you know typical home things, you know housework, cleaning, hanging out with my kids, family members.”</p>

Themes	Subthemes	Participant Responses
Normal or American lifestyle	Typical daily routine	<p>“I go to work...and go home. That’s pretty much it.”</p> <p>“play sports, I hang out with my family a lot, go to the park, I take the kids everywhere, go have...breakfast, go have lunch or dinner...what a normal family would do.”</p> <p>“I get up, go to work, say 'hello' to my neighbors, go to the office, see clients, do my errands, go to the post office, the bank, you know things like that. That’s my regular errands.”</p> <p>“I wake up, I go to work and... that’s pretty much it.”</p> <p>“My typical day is exercising, going to work for about 6 to 7 hours, listening to music, watching sports...that’s pretty much my typical day. Work, exercising, laughing, chilling with friends and family.”</p>
	Identifying as American	<p>“I feel like any American, I was born and raised here...”</p> <p>“here in the United States...you can do whatever you want...me being...Muslim American...showing my religion and my beliefs here is normal. It makes you feel good, it makes you...show people that we are pretty much the same as everybody else, we’re not different.”</p> <p>“I consider myself as more of an American than anything else.”</p>

### Summary

The present study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans about the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims. All participants in this study revealed experiencing or observing prejudice and discrimination from non-Muslims, which created a form of emotional distress for most participants. The



participants described incidences of prejudice and discrimination occurring mostly because of their appearance (the hijab), name, language, and ethnicity.

As a result, some participants responded by stating they either avoid or ignore the behavior of non-Muslims; however, some participants expressed if non-Muslims took the time to educate themselves about Muslim culture and Islam rather than believing portrayals from social media or news outlets, it could help create an understanding among both groups. Findings of the study also revealed that the participants believed tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims is “good and bad” or “it depends” on the situation or location they are in. All the participants in the study were willing and open to sharing their lived experiences as Palestinian Muslim Americans about the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims and were open and honest in their responses. Chapter 4 provided a detailed report of the results of this study, which included the main themes and subthemes that emerged from the data analysis.

Chapter 5 includes an overview of the study and the interpretation of the findings. Chapter 5 also includes a discussion of the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications for social changes, as well as my conclusions from the results of the study.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

In this phenomenological study, I explored Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance. The findings presented in chapter 4 are discussed in this chapter, as are recommendations for future research and the implications for social change. The research presented in the literature review showed that (a) although research on tolerance was conducted, there is a gap in the literature on the need to qualitatively explore the tolerance displayed by majority members towards minority members in the United States (Simon et al., 2018), and that (b) limited psychological research on a few Muslim subgroups can introduce or perpetuate simple-minded stereotypes and generalizations about the Muslim community as a whole (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). The findings of this study support the stereotypes and generalizations about the lived experiences of Muslims described in the research literature.

The research question guiding this study was: What are Palestinian Muslim Americans' lived experiences of non-Muslims' tolerance? All the participants interviewed in this study reported experiencing or observing prejudice and discrimination coming from non-Muslims, which caused emotional distress for most of them. The participants in-depth descriptions of prejudice and discrimination were largely due to their appearance (the hijab), name, language, and ethnicity.

The experiences reported in this study motivated some participants to either avoid or ignore the behavior of non-Muslims. Despite non-Muslims' negative and adverse reactions towards Muslims, some participants expressed the need for non-Muslims to

educate themselves about Muslim culture and Islam, rather than believing the portrayals depicted on social media or news outlets. These participants argued that this could help create an understanding among both groups. Participants also said that the tolerance between Muslims and non-Muslims was “good and bad” or that “it depends” on the situation and the location they are in.

The following sections of this chapter describe the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications for social change, and my conclusions.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

Many non-Muslims associate Muslims and Islam with violence, and support for harsh civil restrictions for Muslims in the United States (Saleem et al., 2017); this has engendered prejudice and discrimination towards Muslims by non-Muslims who view them as a threat to American society (Rosenthal et al., 2015). The literature review described the social pressures experienced by Muslim Americans, involving the denial of employment (Samari, 2016), hate crimes, institutional discrimination, surveillance, and the need for understanding the lived experiences and well-being of Muslim Americans in the United States (Amer & Bagasra, 2013).

### **Prejudice and Discrimination**

When I said to participants in the interviews, Tell me about a situation in which you feel that your religious or ethnic background influenced the way you were treated; 8 out of 10 said they experienced some form of prejudice or discrimination by non-Muslims. Participant F5 described an experience where a man began shouting insults at

her and throwing “stuff” at her while she was walking home from cosmetology school, telling her “to go back to her country.” When asked how this made her feel, Participant F5 responded by stating “I’m traumatized. I had to take off my hijab the next day because I used to walk home from school.” Similar experiences about Muslim women who were motivated to remove their hijab after experiencing prejudice and discrimination were also noted by Ali et al. (2015).

Participant F2 described a situation in which her mother had her hijab physically removed while shopping at a local grocery store, she stated “a lady literally got in her face and was like ‘go back to your country, you don’t deserve to be here’ and yanked my mother’s hijab off of her.” Similar events were also described by Selod (2014), in which hijab-wearing women reported becoming targets of verbal and physical assaults from non-Muslim Americans in public because of the portrayal associated with the hijab as opposing Western values and as a cultural threat. One of the two participants, F3, who also stated she did not personally experience prejudice and discrimination reported she had observed it, stating “I’ve seen the worst of the worst in other people, they get discriminated just from wearing the headscarf and it’s truly sickening.” Other negative experiences about Muslim women and the hijab was also reported by participants F3, F4, M5, M2; while the majority of women stated the hijab or the language they spoke in public motivated the negative reactions of others towards them. As noted by Ali et al. (2015), the assaults are a result of Muslim women being perceived as not physically intimidating therefore those who wear the hijab increasingly encounter hostility in public areas.

Although Participant M1 stated he did not personally experience prejudice and discrimination similar to Participant F3, he described experiencing prejudice and discrimination when he was younger and also observed the negative experiences of other Muslims; stating “I have seen it from friends, cousins, who didn’t take it as good as I did and that would result in physical altercation, arguments, stuff like that.” As described by Zainiddinov (2016), the discrimination faced by many Muslim Americans includes verbal abuse, physical threats, as well as religious and racial profiling. Participant M2 who revealed he works as a barber during his interview, stated experiencing prejudice and discrimination while praying in public, as well as observing the experiences of other Muslims. Participant M5 also responded by stating he has personally experienced prejudice and discrimination at airports, especially when traveling with relatives who were wearing a hijab. Lived experiences such as these were also noted by Samari (2016), in which Muslim Americans reported harassment on college campuses, racial profiling at airports and streets, and the defacing and vandalizing of mosques.

### **Situations and Events**

When participants were asked where they experienced prejudice and discrimination the most? Participant M4 responded by stating “everywhere,” as well as Participant F2 who stated, “anywhere you go nowadays.” As emphasized by Zainiddinov (2016), the discriminatory experiences of Muslim Americans have permeated every aspect of their lives, including encountering such experiences in leisure settings, workplaces, and prisons. The eight participants who stated they had experienced prejudice and discrimination described incidences occurring at grocery stores, workplace

settings, parks, airports, public transportation, restaurants, and schools. According to Selod (2014), Muslim American men are more likely to be perceived as being disloyal and a threat to national security, while women who express their religious beliefs by wearing a head garment (hijab) are constantly questioned about their cultural values and nationality.

Participant F1 who described experiencing prejudice and discrimination was also asked about her overall lived experiences as a Palestinian Muslim American; she stated “I eat like them, I mean, besides the pork or alcohol, my kids go to school just like their kids, we go to the park the way they do.” According to van Giesen et al. (2015), our lived experiences play a significant role in our emotions, daily thoughts, and behavioral processes. In contrast, Participant M3 described his lived experiences involving his neighbors, in which he stated, “I have my neighbors, 80% are non-Muslim, and they all treat me with respect and I treat them with respect the same way.” He stated this was the result of his neighbors personally knowing his character and who he is as a person and not based only on his religion. Social psychological research has indicated that multiple social categorization—“any intergroup context that involves perceiving more than a single basis for social classification”—can help change people’s perceptions and judgements of outgroups (Canan & Foroutan, 2016, p. 1906).

### **Social Media**

The participants of this study were also asked “why do you think this occurs more in this type of setting?” Participant F2 responded by stating “I believe it occurs because the news, the social media, they automatically turn everyone in that background into that

person.” As noted by Saleem et al. (2017), media outlets such as newspapers, cable news, television, and movies have frequently associated Muslims with terrorism and violence, which has contributed to the tolerance (disapproval) and negative attitudes displayed by non-Muslims about Muslims in the United States. Participant M3 also responded by stating “to be honest, the media; the way the media portray us as Arabs and Muslims in general.” According to Saleem et al. (2017), previous research has shown American media outlets have greatly represented Muslims and people of Middle Eastern or Arab descent as evil and violent terrorists, influencing negative attitudes towards Muslim Americans from non-Muslims. Other participants in this study responded by stating they felt the majority did not care enough to educate themselves about Muslim culture and religion; in which Participant F1 responded by stating “they’re not taking the time to educate themselves and they...some of them, some people don’t want to educate themselves.”

### **Health Implications**

The participants in the study were also asked, tell me how this experience made you feel? Participants responded by stating “truly sickening,” “I’m traumatized,” “violated,” “sad,” “angry,” “unsafe,” “hatred,” and “uncomfortable.” Research has suggested that identifying as “the target of discrimination is a major source of stress,” affecting the individual’s physical and mental well-being (Ali et al., 2015, p. 155). Participant F5 responded by stating “I honestly was too scared to even walk home by myself;” as well as Participant M2, who stated “I felt, like I said, unwanted, people just look at you differently.” Experiencing heightened levels of prejudice, discrimination,

and/or threat of actual violence by non-Muslims can have many adverse consequences for Muslim Americans (Rosenthal et al., 2015). After carefully analyzing and interpreting the findings of this study, as well as previously published literature about the lived experiences of Muslims in the United States; it is important that we understand how the lived experiences of members of this population influences their intentions and behavior towards out-group members.

### **Theoretical Framework Applied**

As described by Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, intentions are believed to be influenced by our beliefs about the expectations of others, our attitudes, and degree of control about the behavior performed. Participant F5 described changing her routine and removing her hijab based on her experience walking home, stating "I honestly was too scared to even walk home by myself and until this day honestly, I just don't walk by myself anymore." Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior states that behavior is influenced not only by the individual's attitudes, but also by the social pressures the individual experiences, which in turn influences their intentions. Participant F1 described a situation involving a "cab" ride home that resulted in her getting out of the cab after being profiled by the driver; stating, "I actually had him pull over and drop me off because I didn't wanna, you know, ride in that cab anymore." As described by Ajzen (1991), the person's beliefs about the outcome of their behavior, the subjective norms involving the interpretations and reactions of others, as well as the person's ability to perform a behavior influences their intentions and decision making.



Individuals who experience prejudice and discrimination may attempt to mitigate and control the reactions of others by using “social fronts” as a way of avoiding unfavorable or unwanted outcomes. Goffman’s (1959) impression management theory describes this social process, in which individuals plan and execute different performances depending on the audience that is present (as cited by Tseëlon, 1992). Participant F5 stated she had removed her hijab in order to avoid experiencing similar negative reactions from others. According to Goffman (1959), individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them, which can influence the way they are treated, evaluated, and perceived by others (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Participant M3 also stated people treat him differently after he reveals his name, stating “It’s not even my looks, basically my name, my name is...; so once they see that I get treated differently, they act differently, they treat you differently.”

Goffman’s impression management theory states that individuals attempt to control the impressions of others as a way of supporting and maintaining their desired social identity and self-concept (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Participant F1 stated that her physical appearance helps her avoid negative reactions from others who think she is European or Italian. She also stated once she reveals her ethnicity people begin to treat her differently, stating, “so I have to correct them and say, ‘no, I’m Palestinian’ and that’s when the whole thing starts.” Self-presentation (impression management) helps individuals define their social role when interacting with others, as well as the direction and tone of the interaction (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

According to Goffman (1959), factors such as desired social identity, role constraints, values of the audience, and discrepancies between current and desired social identity, motivate the behavior of individuals (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). The motivating factors identified by Goffman (1959) about the interpretation of situations and events that motivate behavior are also emphasized by Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior; in which intentions and perceptions involving behavioral control can significantly contribute to the prediction of behavior (Ajzen, 1991). As a result, there are some Muslim and non-Muslim Arabs who present themselves differently than their origin of ethnicity in order to "enjoy privileges of whiteness, while others do not" (Selod, 2014, p. 3).

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations regarding this study. The limitations of this study include the ethnicity of the participants (Palestinian Muslim Americans), which prevents the study from being generalized to other Muslim Americans in the United States who are of different ethnic origin. Other limitations about this research study include the age of the participants, which excludes the lived experiences of individuals under the age of 18. Also, the lived experiences described in this study are limited to those who live in Cleveland, Ohio and cannot be generalized to other Palestinian Muslim Americans who live in other cities or states within the United States.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations about further research consists of recruiting and exploring the lived experiences of Muslim Americans of different ethnic origin within the city of Cleveland, Ohio, or recruiting participants of similar ethnic origin who live in other cities

within the United States. Another recommendation for further research involves the recruitment of Muslim Americans of similar or different ethnic origin who are under the age of 18, which may reveal lived experiences that are different than those recruited in this study.

### **Implications**

The information obtained from this research study can provide insight about the development and implementation of social strategies needed in improving the social interactions, communication, and relationships among community members of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. As a result, promoting positive social change that strengthens the social cohesion and trust among community members of different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

### **Conclusion**

Motivating and influencing the communication and engagement among Muslim Americans and those of different ethnic and religious backgrounds in the United States can help in strengthening community resilience and cohesion among community members. Encouraging polyculturalism was found to be associated with less negative evaluations and behavioral intentions toward Muslim Americans (Rosenthal et al., 2015). Promoting and developing social strategies such as community events organized by local officials or community leaders can motivate and increase the degree of communication among community members of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Strengthening the social cohesion among Muslims and non-Muslims consists of developing programs and social/economic conditions that strengthen ties and increase civic engagement (Ellis

& Abdi, 2017). As a result, this allows for the discovery of new information among community members about similar interests and concerns involving social, educational, governmental, and safety issues within the community.

The newly discovered information obtained through organized community events that promote the interaction of individuals and groups can influence community members of different ethnic and religious backgrounds to perceive out-group members similar to themselves based on their shared interests, concerns, and lived experiences within the community. Social events that motivate, encourage, and increase the social interactions among community members can also allow those of different cultural and religious backgrounds to better assimilate to American culture by increasing the degree of trust among community members of different religious and ethnic backgrounds. To promote positive intergroup relationships and intergroup trust, an assurance is needed that an outgroup has positive intentions (Choma et al., 2018).

The social strategy described in this research about the development and implementation of social events can help to mitigate prejudice and discrimination among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States (Ellis & Abdi, 2017). Emphasized by the common ingroup identity model, recategorizing ingroups and outgroups into a single group can increase the likelihood of prosocial behaviors being expressed, since intergroup bias is reduced and representations is transformed from “us” vs. “them” to an inclusive “we” (McDowell-Smith, 2013). Influencing and motivating the behavior and social interactions among Muslims and non-Muslims can help in creating positive social

change that contributes to the safety and well-being of individuals, groups, families, and communities.

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## Appendix A: Interview Question

1. Tell me about a situation in which you feel that your religious or ethnic background influenced the way you were treated.

Probe: Tell me how this experience made you feel? (If not directly answered)

2. What is your experience as a Palestinian Muslim American, living in the United States?

Probe: Could you describe some of the activities you experience throughout your day? (If not directly answered)

3. Tell me about your experience regarding the prejudice and discrimination displayed by non-Muslims.

Probe: Where have you experienced it the most? (If not directly answered)

Probe: Why do you think it occurs more in this type of setting? (If not directly answered)

4. Can you tell me how you feel regarding the tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States?

5. I appreciate your time and willingness to participate in the interview. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me that you feel is important for me to know?

### Appendix B: Partner Organization Consent Form

I hereby give consent to the researcher for this study to display an invitation (flyer) within my business for the purpose of recruiting participants for this study. The researcher is inviting Palestinian Muslim Americans who reside, work, or attend school in Cleveland, Ohio to participate in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent,” allowing you to understand your rights as a partner organization regarding the research study. The study is being conducted by a researcher who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to explore and discover the lived experiences of Palestinian Muslim Americans, regarding the tolerance displayed by non-Muslims in the United States.

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your role as a partner organization for the study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down your participation at any time. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to provide consent as a partner organization for the study. If you decide to provide consent as a partner organization regarding the study now, you can still change your mind later.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being a partner organization for this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. The potential information discovered in this research may help in the development and implementation of social strategies, which can be used to improve the existing problem among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States.

**Privacy:**

Reports coming out of this study will not share the identities of partner organizations. Details that might identify partner organizations, such as the location or name of the business will not be shared. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Data will be kept secure by storing the data in a password-protected computer system; as well as saved on a flash drive that will be kept in a locked box. Data will be kept for a period of at least five years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you may have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher. If you want to speak privately about your rights as a partner organization, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at my university at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 09-04-20-0508104 and it expires on September 3, 2021.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

**Obtaining Your Consent**

If you feel you understand your rights involving the study well enough to make a decision, please indicate your consent by signing below.

Printed Name of Partner Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Consent \_\_\_\_\_

Partner Organization's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteer participants needed for research study  
regarding the lived experience of Palestinian  
Muslim Americans in Cleveland, Ohio**

The potential information discovered in this research may help in the development and implementation of social strategies that can be used to improve the social interactions among Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States. Thank you for your time and consideration.