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## Experiences of discrimination among Arab Americans and Muslim Americans post-9/11 attacks

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the experiences of discrimination among Arab Americans and Muslim Americans in the United States following the attacks of September 11, 2001. Although previous research has documented discrimination among these groups, many of these are quantitative studies that fail to capture their qualitative experiences.

Twenty-eight Arab American and Muslim American adults completed a mixed methods survey which asked respondents how the events of 9/11 impacted their sense of safety and security. Additionally, they were asked to explore their experiences of discrimination since 9/11 and to speak about their experiences of media bias.

The findings indicate that many Arab Americans and Muslim American respondents were discriminated against by strangers and acquaintances on various occasions. Respondents most commonly endorsed: airline profiling, microaggressions, private discrimination or hate crimes, and hate speech. Themes explored by respondents included: “terrorist” stereotyping and discrimination based on physical appearance. Respondents expressed that their sense of safety was minimally to moderately impacted by 9/11. All respondents experienced media bias since 9/11, including general ignorance, lumping Arabs and Muslims together into one group, and negative “terrorist” stereotypes.

**EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION AMONG ARAB AMERICANS AND MUSLIM  
AMERICANS POST-9/11 ATTACKS**

A project based upon an independent investigation,  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2012

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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First, I would like to thank the individuals who took the time to participate in this study. I am touched by your honest and personal narratives and the courage and vulnerability you showed in sharing them. May we all continue to fight together against all forms of discrimination until we eradicate it.

I would also like to thank the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee for helping to recruit participants for this study and, more importantly, for its work towards ending discrimination.

I wish to thank my research advisor, Dr. Gael McCarthy, for her support and guidance throughout the thesis process.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

Nearly eleven years after the attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, the events of September 11, 2001 are still capturing the attention of a nation. For many residents of the United States, these events have changed the way they live their lives. Some lost loved ones who were riding in planes that were hijacked or who were working in or near the World Trade Center that day. Others lost friends and family who fought in the military in Iraq and Afghanistan in the following years. Many Americans were stunned and fearful as they sat glued to the television on that day, and U.S. leaders at the time responded with a “war on terror” which set out to eradicate the threat of future attacks. But years later, while many of us watch as a new building is erected in place of the World Trade Center and grumble about the increased security at airports, a group of U.S. residents and citizens have endured persistent discrimination that spiked immediately following “September 11<sup>th</sup>”: Arabs and Muslims. Some individuals who previously “passed as white” were suddenly grappling with being unfairly treated based on their ethnicity, religion, and language. Other individuals were suddenly targeted because they “looked” Arab or Muslim.

Although there is abundant theoretical literature on discrimination, there seems to be scant information in the discrimination literature specific to Arabs and Muslims. Nevertheless, there is applicable literature on discrimination between white ethnic groups in the U.S. Furthermore, as the nation continues to grapple with Islamophobia and discrimination against Arabs, more organizations and scholars seem to be documenting this trend.

This study has explored the experiences of discrimination among Arab Americans and Muslim Americans in the United States since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. Since much of the recent literature has focused on documenting discrimination against Arabs and Muslims, this study aimed to capture the specific personal experiences of Arab and Muslim American citizens. These individuals not only experienced the fear that gripped the entire nation on September 11, 2001, but have also felt the backlash of these attacks turned against them in the form of discrimination, hate speech, microaggressions, hate crimes and stereotyping.

This topic is something I became aware of on many levels. As an Arab-American, my family members and I experienced personal instances of discrimination. As a social worker I heard stories of personal discrimination based on Arab ethnicity and Muslim faith and worked with an organization that documented incidents and defended individuals who had been the targets of discrimination by employers, landlords, neighbors, colleagues, airport officials, and immigration officers. It became clear to me that while this issue has been documented in facts and figures, the literature on this issue has not adequately captured the voices of the Arabs and Muslims impacted by discrimination.

As social workers, our code of ethics demands that we remain dedicated to the needs of persons experiencing oppression and marginalization. In order for us to provide supportive psychotherapy to Arabs and Muslims who have experienced discrimination and to advocate for them in our policy work, it is important for us to better understand their experiences. It has therefore been the intent of this study to capture the deeply complex and personal stories of Arab- and Muslim Americans who have been impacted in various ways since September 11, 2001.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter will review the literature on discrimination against Arab and Muslim individuals and entities in the United States. According to Naber (2000), discrimination against people of Arab and Middle Eastern descent in the United States has been recorded as far back as 1900; however, recent studies have shown that there has been a sharp increase in instances of discrimination since the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center that occurred on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (Disha, Cavendish & King, 2011; Rousseau, Hassan, & Thombs, 2011; Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2007; Ajrouch, 2004; Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Ibish, 2003; US Commission on Civil Rights, 2003; American Civil Liberties Union, 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2002; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2001; Ibish, 2001). According to the “Report on Hate Crimes and Discrimination Against Arab Americans,” there were 700 hate crimes committed against Arab Americans or those perceived to be Arab Americans, Arabs, and Muslims in the first nine weeks following the attacks, including several murders. In “The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States,” the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reports that it received 1,717 reports of hate crimes and civil rights complaints against Muslims in the six months following September 11, 2001 (2007). Furthermore, employment discrimination quadrupled from previous years’ reports (Ibish, 2003). The FBI hate crimes reports indicate that immediately following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, hate violence against Muslims increased by 1600 percent (2001). Although the following year this type of violence

decreased by two-thirds, the 2010 report indicates a 50 percent increase over the previous year (2010). It is estimated that discrimination in this group is under-reported since the U.S. government does not recognize Arab Americans as a minority group (Awad, 2010).

### **Empirical Studies of Prejudice against Arabs and Muslims in the U.S.**

There is a small body of empirical literature that examines prejudice, discrimination and violence against Arabs and Muslims in the United States following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Many of these studies are quantitative, rather than capturing the qualitative experience of these individuals who have been impacted (Arab American Institute Foundation, 2002; Awad, 2010; Padela, 2010; Rousseau, 2010; Disha, 2011). Awad (2010) used the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale, the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure in order to examine the impact of acculturation, ethnic identity and religious affiliation on perceived discrimination for individuals of Arab or Middle Eastern descent. The sample comprised 177 Middle Eastern and Arab individuals between the ages of 14 and 65 years old. Padela (2010) assessed the prevalence of perceived abuse and discrimination among Arab American adults after September 11, 2001 and associations between abuse or discrimination and psychological distress, level of happiness, and health status using a face to face survey in 2003, and a representative, population-based sample of Arab American adults in the Detroit area. Rousseau (2010) compared experiences of discrimination from 1998 to 2007 among recent Arab (Muslim and non-Muslim) and Haitian immigrants to Montreal. The study examined the association between perceived discrimination and psychological distress (as measured by the Hopkins Symptom Checklist-25) in 1998 and 2007. The study used cross sectional comparative research samples randomly selected from the registry of the ministry of immigration and cultural communities of Quebec.

Disha (2011) examined whether hate crimes against Arabs and Muslims in the US before and after September 11, 2001 increased or changed after the attacks. The study used the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (2002), US Census Bureau 2002, and information from the web sites of a variety of Arab advocacy organizations and other private organizations. On the other hand, Abu-Ras and Abu-Bader (2008) conducted an exploratory study using focus groups guided by a structured trauma theory-based interview. Eighty-three Arab Americans from New York City participated in the study.

Many of the studies indicated that September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 impacted the way that Arab Americans and Muslims are treated in the U.S. According to Padela, one in four (or 25%) of Arab Americans reported post-September 11 personal or familial abuse and 15% reported personally having a bad experience related to ethnicity, with higher rates among Muslims than Christians. Experiences of abuse were associated with higher levels of psychological distress, lower levels of happiness and worse health status (2010). In Abu-Ras and Abu-Bader's study (2008), Arab Americans in New York who were interviewed expressed fear of hate crimes, anxiety about the future, threats to their safety, loss of community, isolation, and stigmatization. Disha's study (2011) found that hate crimes against Arabs and Muslims increased dramatically in the months following 9/11, whereas hate crimes against other groups decreased. Geographic concentration and structural determinants of these crimes remained the same as prior to 9/11. Rousseau (2010) concluded that perceived discrimination increased from 1998 to 2007 among all immigrant groups in Montreal. Muslim Arabs experienced a significant increase in psychological distress associated with discrimination. Awad (2010) indicated that Arab/Middle Eastern Americans who reported lower levels of dominant society immersion tended to report higher levels of discrimination. Furthermore, Muslims reported a higher level of discrimination than

Christians. The Arab American Institute Foundation (2002) surveyed by phone 505 Middle Eastern or Arabic-speaking individuals chosen at random in 2002 and survey results were compared to a similar survey conducted in October 2001. They were questioned on their experiences of discrimination and ethnic pride. They found that nearly one in three Arab Americans surveyed had experienced discrimination in the past because of their ethnicity. Forty percent of survey respondents knew someone who was discriminated against since 9/11. Between October 2001 and May 2002, there was a 9 percent increase in the number of respondents who believe that Arab Americans have been victims of ethnic profiling. Following September 11<sup>th</sup>, some Arab Americans expressed concern about displaying their ethnicity. The majority (8 in 10) responded by hanging American flags in allegiance to the U.S., contributing to funds, and donating blood. Furthermore, most maintained their pride in their ethnicity (Arab American Institute Foundation, 2002).

### **Theoretical and Historical Review of Prejudice against Arabs and Muslims**

Discrimination against Muslims and Arabs existed long before the events of September 11, 2001. To understand the history of discrimination, one must understand the history of race in the United States as well as the history of immigration among Arabs and Muslims.

**History of Race in the U.S.:** When Europeans arrived in the Western Hemisphere, the “natives” they encountered made them question whether *all people* could be considered part of the “family of man.” Their practices of slavery and extermination divided Europeans from “Others,” who looked different and did not practice Christianity. Europeans continued to justify these claims through “science” that “proved” that these “Others” were not only different from white Europeans, but also that they were inferior to them (Omi & Winant, 1994). As a result, for many years, being white was a precondition for receiving citizenship (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007;

Gualtieri, 2001; Omi & Winant, 1994). Furthermore, this set the precedent for a dichotomy between white and “other.” As a result of white being the social norm, “Whites can easily reach adulthood without thinking much about their racial group” (Tatum, 1997, p. 93). As Ajrouch & Jamal (2007) state:

Whiteness represents a sociological category that demarcates unspoken privilege and power. Its existence derives from the construction of ‘otherness’; in other words, the designation of those groups held in lower esteem possessing less power and fewer resources in society. To be white means not having to refer to one’s race; it is a privileged status that does not require contemplation or reflection. (p. 860-861)

This “white privilege” is therefore constructed upon “unearned advantage and conferred dominance” (McIntosh, 1989, p. 12).

**History of Arab Identity in the U.S.:** The term “Arab” is used to describe people from the 22 North African and Middle Eastern countries belonging to the Arab League. It is estimated that between 1.2 million and 3.5 million Americans of Arab descent live in the United States (Brittingham & de la Cruz, 2005; Arab American Institute, 2003).

Arab immigration to the United States occurred mainly in three waves: pre-World War II, post-World War II, and a more recent wave of refugees (Arab American Institute, 1997; Awad, 2010; Britto, 2008; Britto & Amer, 2007; Naber, 2000; Naff, 1985; Tatum, 1997).

The first wave of Arab immigrants were mainly Christian farmers, merchants and laborers who came from Syria and Lebanon to the U.S. in the late 1800s to fill labor demands. Immigrants in this first group who immigrated prior to 1899 were categorized as “Turks” as they came from the Ottoman Empire. As a result, data on this group are not particularly accurate since Arabs were categorized alongside Greeks, Albanians, Armenians, and other Eastern Europeans.

After 1899, immigration officials began to classify certain immigrants under a separate “Syrian” ethnic group, which alongside the previous “Turkish” ethnicity, was included under “Turkey in Asia.” Newspapers of the time addressed “Syrians” as Arabians, Armenians, Assyrians, and/or Turks (Naber, 2000). On September 14, 1915, George Dow, a “Syrian” immigrant living in South Carolina filed a petition for naturalization, which he had previously been denied twice on the grounds that “while Syrians may be Caucasian, they were not ‘that particular free white person to whom the Act of Congress [1790] had denoted the privilege of citizenship.’” Upon hearing the appeal, the judge ruled that “Syrians” “were to be classed as white persons,” and were therefore eligible for naturalization (Gualtieri, 2001; Naber, 2000). This group of Arab immigrants was targeted by discrimination, but not to the same extent as other communities, such as the Chinese, blacks, Jews or Italians (Naber, 2000).

Naff (1985) claims that by the middle of the twentieth century, Arab Americans were one of the most acculturated ethnic groups in America, identifying as white/Caucasian, Anglicizing their names, and speaking English. However, as a second wave of immigrants arrived after the state of Israel was established in 1948, they increasingly identified as Arab and brought with them a sense of Arab nationalism. These immigrants were mostly Muslims or other Arabs refugees who were displaced when the state of Israel was created. Many more women immigrated at this time. This group was also comprised of educated, bilingual professionals.

The third wave of immigrants, who arrived post-1965, was a religiously and geographically diverse group including students, refugees, professionals, and entrepreneurs (Britto, 2008; Naber, 2000). Many of the Arab immigrants who have come to the U.S. since the 1960s have Arab identities “shaped by Cold War politics and the Arab-Israeli conflict” and have been “increasingly impacted by anti-Arab sentiments and ‘terrorist’ stereotyping in the U.S.”

(Tatum, 1997, p. 158). According to Naber (2000), this began with the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, which confirmed the U.S.'s alliance with Israel and began the U.S. media's negative portrayals of Arabs as "the pre-eminent enemies of the West" (p. 41).

In his 1997 introduction to *Covering Islam*, which he originally wrote in 1981, Said stated that within those 15 years, "...there has been an intense focus on Muslims and Islam in the American and Western media, most of it characterized by a more highly exaggerated stereotyping and belligerent hostility than what I had previously described" (p. xi). Although there have been provocations claimed by Muslims and Islamic countries throughout the 1980s, including a number of plane hijackings, bombings, and the taking of hostages, these incidents were covered by the U.S. media, in a way that indiscriminately condemns "Islam" as if it were the cause of these acts. In place of objectivity and scholarship, U.S. journalists often covered these stories with sensationalism and generalizations (Said, 1997, p. xvi).

As a result, the "Arab American" identity, which began to develop in the 1960s, is a complicated one. While Arab Americans began to assert a cultural identity in response to the "Americanization" of previous generations, opposing forces were simultaneously trying to erase this ethnic identity by distorting the meaning of "Arab" and attaching derogatory meaning to the term (Naber, 2000, p. 41-42).

It is under these circumstances that the events of September 11, 2001 occurred. It is not surprising then, that discrimination against Arabs and Muslims worsened. Miller and Garran (2008) describe:

The wake of 9/11 has seen many instances of anti-Arab sentiment, stereotyping, and hostility. This has been exacerbated by the unending "war on terrorism" and military

conflicts with Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as in the severe unresolved tensions between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East. (p. 51)

Verinakis (2007) describes the ways in which George W. Bush used his speeches to construct Arabs and Muslims as racialized “others” in opposition to “us,” Americans. This created a “state of exception” that justified the creation of the Patriot Act, the Department of Homeland Security and the preference of martial law over domestic law. Additionally, this “state of exception” permitted physical violence against “others” and the suspension of their civil liberties.

### **Areas for Future Research**

Arabs and Muslims have a long and complicated history of discrimination and identity formation in the U.S. At first, Arab immigrants were classified by the government as racialized “others,” then as white, and then back to “other.” The events of September 11, 2001, however, have strongly impacted the way in which Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. are treated by society and the media. The existing literature documents the history of Arab identity formation and discrimination against Arab ethnic groups in the U.S., as well as the sharp increase of discrimination towards Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. A large number of quantitative studies concluded that there was a sharp increase in discrimination towards Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

More research is needed to capture the specific, personal experiences of Arab and Muslim individuals: the quality of these experiences and the emotional and practical impact that these experiences have had on their lives. Arab Americans and Muslim Americans are two distinct and extremely heterogeneous groups. Their experiences may vary based on their country of birth, how many generations their families have been in the U.S., their primary language,



religion, geographic location, sense of community, the lightness or tone of their skin, their accents or lack thereof, what they choose to wear, and many more variables. Lumping these groups all together, as the media often does, does not give justice to the grave differences that may exist within this group.

By learning from Arab Americans and Muslim Americans about their experiences of discrimination, this study has aimed to increase our understanding of the ways in which discrimination is experienced in varied and unique ways by these individuals and the long-lasting impact of these experiences. This study has explored whether Arab American respondents experienced a shift in the way they were treated, whether they experienced increased discrimination including microaggressions, hate crimes, or stereotyping; and, if so, what these experiences looked and felt like, following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center in 2001.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methodology**

This study was designed to explore the experiences of discrimination among Arab American and Muslim American adults following the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. By directly engaging members of the Arab American and Muslim American communities, the study aimed to illuminate the specific experiences of discrimination within these communities, and the continuing impact of such experiences on their lives. After collecting demographic data, the study asked participants to describe experiences of discrimination, microaggressions, stereotyping, hate crimes or hate speech based on their self-identified identity, or what others believed to be their ethnic or religious identity, including how many times they felt targeted, by whom, what type of discrimination they experienced, and how upsetting it was to them. It should be noted that options provided for types of discrimination experienced were based on those used in the Report on Hate Crimes and Discrimination against Arab Americans (Ibish, 2001). Additionally, participants were asked whether they had felt targeted by media bias and to describe that or those experiences.

The study used a mixed-methods exploratory design. An online survey was created in order to explore: 1) whether Arab-American respondents experienced a shift in the way they were treated, 2) whether they experienced increased discrimination including microaggressions, hate crimes, hate speech, or stereotyping since September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and, if so, what these experiences looked and felt like, and 3) whether they felt targeted by media bias. The survey

asked questions that provided opportunities for participants to elaborate on their responses in comment boxes. Thus, this mixed method study incorporated elements of both qualitative and quantitative research in order to best capture a range of experiences. An exploratory design was used in the hope of “generating insights” on this “relatively... unstudied” area of research involving fairly recent events (Rubin & Babbie, 2010, p. 41).

At the end of the survey, participants who elected to participate in a follow up phone interview were invited to contact the investigator. This second phase of the study was expected to involve five or six qualitative phone interviews, exploring these volunteers’ experiences in more depth; however, no respondents contacted the investigator to participate in this second phase.

Although no reliability or validity tests were run on the survey instrument, the survey instrument was reviewed by the research advisor. This review served to ensure that questions were clearly worded and survey directions were appropriate and clear.

### **Sample**

In order to be eligible to participate in the study, individuals needed to be 1) over the age of 18, 2) able to read and write in English, 3) citizens of the United States of America, 4) self-identified as Muslim American or Arab American, and 5) self-identified as having experienced discrimination since September 11, 2001 on the basis of their Muslim American or Arab American identity. Non-eligible participants were screened out at the beginning of the survey by asking participants in the study to confirm that they met all of the above criteria before continuing the remainder of the survey.

Participants were identified through various methods including convenience sampling and snowball method sampling. Using various recruitment methods allowed for recruiting a

diverse sample as to various racial, religious and ethnic groups, a range of ages, and varied experiences. An internet survey was used in order to be accessible to individuals in various locations throughout the U.S. and because such a method allowed participants to remain anonymous unless they chose to volunteer for the in-depth interview, wherein only confidentiality could be promised.

Twenty-eight respondents completed the survey for my study. A total of fifty-three respondents accessed the survey online; however, twenty-five of those people did not meet the inclusion criteria and were directed out of the survey. No paper surveys were used as recruitment was done online; the online method was assumed to offer many participants an opportunity to respond, as even individuals who do not have internet access at home can gain access to email and social media through public computers at libraries, schools, community centers, and internet cafes.

## **Recruitment**

Recruitment for the survey was done online, using email and social media contacts. Recruitment took place between March and April 2012. During this time I reached out to my contacts through Facebook, a social media web site. Simultaneously, a contact of mine at the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), a member-based anti-discrimination organization, circulated the link to my survey via the organization's Facebook page, and to select members of the ADC organization by email. Finally, at the end of my survey, I asked participants to pass on my survey, using the link on survey monkey, to individuals they thought would be interested in participating.

In January, I contacted the Vice President of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and informed him of my project. He agreed to circulate the information about and

web link to my study via Facebook and email (Appendix A contains a copy of his agreement to support this study).

In March, I posted a recruitment letter (Appendix B) on a Facebook page, which included information about the study and the link to my survey online at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) (Appendix C includes a copy of the survey itself as it actually appeared online). I then invited all of my Facebook contacts to view the page. I also sent out several messages to my contacts reminding them to participate in the study if they met eligibility criteria.

I had intended to collect data over a longer period of time, but due to delays in receiving approval from the Smith College School for Social Work's Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC), I could not start data collection until March. By the mid-April deadline for completing data collection, I had received twenty-eight complete responses to the survey. Since the sample size was less than the desired fifty for doing parametric statistics, I consulted with my thesis advisor, who advised me to close data collection, since there had been a stagnant period despite my reminders.

### **Ethics and Safeguards**

The thesis proposal was submitted and approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC) at Smith School for Social Work; this committee exists to protect the rights of any human subjects who may participate in Smith affiliated research, such as protection of confidentiality (the HSRC's approval letter appears in Appendix D). The HSR further reviewed the proposal to certify that all possible efforts were made to consider and minimize the risks of participating in the research. The informed consent included for participants in the survey outlined the study, including the potential risks and benefits of participation, the ethical standards and measures to protect confidentiality and the researcher's contact information for questions and

comments (Appendix E contains a copy of the informed consent information). All participants agreed to the informed consent at the start of the survey and were not permitted to continue responding to questions until this was complete. Participation in the study involved a potential risk of being reminded of content, memories, or emotions that could be troubling, depending on each participant's experiences. In order to help participants with difficult emotions, I provided participants with a list of mental health referrals and anti-discrimination resources at the start and end of the survey (Appendix F). Participants may have also felt reluctant to answer personal questions without getting to know the researcher. Participants were informed that all information collected in the quantitative portion of the survey would remain anonymous and information provided in comment boxes would be kept confidential.

Participants may have felt emotional-social benefits from participating in the study, such as being able to speak about their experiences in an anonymous survey, and may have gained insight from the experience of responding to the survey.

Other than the identifying information filled out by the participants, such as demographic data or personal information shared in open-ended questions, the online surveys were anonymous since Survey Monkey does not collect the names or addresses of participants. Participants were reminded in the online informed consent that they were free to choose *not* to respond to any questions that they were not comfortable answering and could stop the survey at any time. Since participants' identifying data are encrypted by survey monkey, participants were warned in the informed consent that once their responses were submitted, they could not be identified and therefore could not be withdrawn from the data set or destroyed separately. Surveys submitted online were only accessible to the researcher by password. At the close of analysis, all online surveys were downloaded as a file to a secure portable media device that was securely stored in

compliance with research standards. The survey and all associated files were removed from survey monkey and similarly stored.

All materials from the study will be kept secure for three years as required by the Federal government and will be destroyed at that time or kept secure until no longer needed and then destroyed.

### **Data Collection**

Interested participants had access to the online survey from March to April 2012. This mixed method survey was created by the researcher and managed online using the Survey Monkey online program. The survey questionnaire consisted of eighteen multiple choice, open-ended, and Likert scale questions (Appendix C).

The first portion of the survey asked participants to provide demographic information including age, self-identified religion, gender, race and ethnicity, and what country they and their parent(s) were born in. Next, participants were asked how much the events that occurred on September 11, 2001 shook their sense of personal security and safety. This question was used previously by Padela and Heisler (2010) in their study on the correlations Arab Americans' perceived abuse and discrimination after September 11, 2001 and psychological distress, level of happiness and health status. Participants were then asked whether they had experienced discrimination, microaggressions, stereotyping, hate crimes or hate speech based on their self-identified identity, or what others perceive to be their ethnic or religious identity. If the answer to this question was yes, these participants were asked to rate severity and frequency on Likert scales, identify what types of discrimination they experienced, whom they felt targeted by, and to describe the experience. The next portion of the survey asked whether participants felt targeted or hurt by media bias, or discriminatory comments about their ethnic or religious group. If so, they were

asked to elaborate on this or these experiences. Finally, participants were asked whether they would like to participate in a follow up interview by phone.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were collected through the Survey Monkey online survey. In some cases, respondents did not answer all questions; however, as long as they met inclusion criteria and answered most of the questions, they were included in the analysis. All data were cleaned before the start of analysis. All questions were developed based on themes prevalent in some of the scholarly literature on this topic as well as the researcher's personal and professional experience interacting with Arab American and Muslim American individuals who have experienced religious or ethnic discrimination since September 11, 2001. All identifiable information was removed from the open-ended responses. Analysis of the mixed-method survey consisted of: descriptive statistics for all demographic, checklist and Likert scale questions, and qualitative analysis of open-ended responses.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographics of the sample population as well as to summarize survey responses. Survey responses were exported into Microsoft Excel and frequencies were run for participants' demographics: race and ethnicity, gender, age, country of origin, number of years lived in the U.S., parents' countries of origin, and religion. Additional frequencies were calculated for how many times an incident of discrimination occurred, how upsetting these experiences were, what kinds of discrimination occurred, whom the participant felt targeted by, whether participants felt targeted by media bias or discriminatory comments against their ethnic or religious group. Marjorie Postal, Smith's Statistical Analyst, provided the support in the statistical analysis of the data. Qualitative analyses were then conducted on the open-ended questions where participants were asked to describe their experiences of discrimination and media



bias, to identify recurrent themes, unusual responses, and to locate particularly illuminating or evocative comments for use in quotation in the thesis report. (Again, all potentially identifying information in these quotations has been removed before being incorporated in the report.)

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Findings**

This study investigated the experiences of discrimination among Arab American and Muslim American adults in the U.S. following the following the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Participants were asked to complete a survey (Appendix C) that asked them the following questions: How much, if any, have the events of 9/11 shaken Arab Americans' and Muslim Americans' sense of safety and security? Have Arab Americans and Muslim Americans experienced discrimination, microaggressions, stereotyping, hate crimes or hate speech based on their self-identified or perceived ethnic or religious identity since September 11, 2001? How many times did an incident occur? How upsetting were these experiences? What kind of discrimination have they experienced? Whom were they targeted by? What did these incidents entail? How did these incidents impact Arab Americans and Muslim Americans over time? Have Arab Americans and Muslim Americans felt hurt or targeted by media bias, discriminatory comments, or hostile statement directed at their ethnic or religious groups following the 9/11 attacks and in what way? How were they impacted over time?

This chapter will present the study's major findings beginning with the demographics of the study sample. The chapter will go on to describe the impact that the 9/11 attacks had on respondents' sense of safety and security. This will then be followed by a detailed section that entails respondents' experiences of discrimination since September 11, 2001. The chapter will conclude with an examination of respondents' experiences of media bias.

## Demographics

This study used data collected from twenty-eight respondents. Although fifty-three respondents accessed the survey online and agreed to the informed consent, twenty-five of those individuals did not meet the inclusion criteria for the study and thus, were not included in the data set.

The sample was fairly diverse in race and ethnicity and somewhat diverse in age and gender. Of the 28 respondents, 67.9% identified themselves as Arab-American, 32.1% identified as Middle-Eastern, 14.3% identified as African-American or Black, 14.3% identified as non-Hispanic white, 3.6% identified as Hispanic or Latino/a, 3.6% identified as Native American, 10.7% (n=3) responded that they identified as multi-racial or multi-ethnic: “Lebanese, Italian, Irish,” “Pakistani-American,” and “South Asian (Pakistani) & Mexican.” No respondents identified as Asian-American or Pacific Islander. The sample was slightly more female than male, with 60.7% of respondents identifying as female, 35.7% identifying as male, and 3.6% (n=1) did not respond to this question. Respondents ranged in age from 23 to 68, but the distribution was skewed towards the lower ages. The mean age was 35.92 years old, the median was 29.50, the standard deviation was 15.054 and the variance was 226.634.

Regarding country of origin, most of the respondents were U.S. born (60.7%). Of the remaining respondents, 10.7% were born in Egypt, 10.7% were born in Iraq, 7.2% were born in Saudi Arabia, 3.6% (n=1) were born in Lebanon and 3.6% (n=1) were born in Somalia. The respondents had spent many years living in the U.S. (9 to 58years), with a mean of 30.22 years, median of 28.00 years, and a mode of 15 years, and a standard deviation of 13.941 years.

Most respondents had fathers and mothers born outside of the U.S. While 21.4% of respondents had fathers born in the U.S., 78.6% had fathers born outside the U.S. Of respondents

fathers born outside the U.S., 17.9% were born in Egypt, 17.9% were born in Palestine, 10.7% were born in Iraq, 7.1% were born in Pakistan, 7.1% were born in Lebanon, 3.6% (n=1) were born in Gambia, 3.6% (n=1) were born in Libya, 3.6% (n=1) were born in Somalia, and 3.6% (n=1) were born in Syria. As for mothers of respondents, only 28.6% were born in the U.S. Of the mothers born outside the U.S., 14.3% were born in Egypt, 7.1% were born in Lebanon, 7.1% were born in Palestine, 7.1% were born in Morocco, and 3.6% (n=1) were born in the following places: France, Gambia, Iraq, Irbid, Jordan, Kashmir, Mexico, Somalia, and Syria.

The sample was fairly homogeneous when it comes to their identified religion: 60.7% of respondents identified as Muslim, 17.9% were Atheist or Agnostic, 7.1% identified as Christian, 3.6% (n=1) identified as Melkite Greek Catholic, 3.6% (n=1) were non-denominational, and 3.6% (n=1) were Unitarian Universalist. No respondents identified as being Jewish or Buddhist. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are illustrated in Table 1 following.

**Table 1****Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=28)**

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Age	Mean: 35.92 Median: 29.50 Mode: 23 Standard deviation: 15.054 Minimum: 23 Maximum: 68	
Race/Ethnicity	Arab-American Middle-Eastern African-American/Black Non-Hispanic White Multi-racial or Multi-ethnic ("Lebanese, Italian, Irish," "Pakistani-American," "South Asian (Pakistani) and Mexican) Native American Hispanic or Latino/a	67.9% (19) 32.1% (9) 14.3% (4) 14.3% (4) 10.7% (3)   3.6% (1) 3.6% (1)
Gender	Female Male	60.7% (17) 35.7% (10)
Country of Birth	United States Egypt Iraq Saudia Arabia Lebanon Somalia	60.7% (17) 10.7% (3) 10.7% (3) 7.2% (2) 3.6% (1) 3.6% (1)
Years Lived in the U.S.	Mean: 30.22 Median: 28.00 Mode: 15 Standard deviation: 13.941 Minimum: 9 Maximum: 58	

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**Table 1****Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=28) Continued**

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Religion		
	Muslim	60.7% (17)
	Atheist or Agnostic	17.9% (5)
	Christian	7.1% (2)
	Melkite Greek Catholic	3.6% (1)
	Non-denominational	3.6% (1)
	Unitarian Universalist	3.6% (1)
Country of Father's Birth		
	United States	21.4% (6)
	Egypt	17.9% (5)
	Palestine	17.9% (5)
	Iraq	10.7% (3)
	Pakistan	7.1% (2)
	Lebanon	7.1% (2)
	Gambia	3.6% (1)
	Libya	3.6% (1)
	Somalia	3.6% (1)
	Syria	3.6% (1)
Country of Mother's Birth		
	United States	28.6% (8)
	Egypt	14.3% (4)
	Lebanon	7.1% (2)
	Palestine	7.1% (2)
	Morocco	7.1% (2)
	France	3.6% (1)
	Gambia	3.6% (1)
	Iraq	3.6% (1)
	Irbid, Jordan	3.6% (1)
	Kashmir	3.6% (1)
	Mexico	3.6% (1)
	Somalia	3.6% (1)
	Syria	3.6% (1)

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**Sense of Safety and Security**

The majority of respondents indicated that their sense of safety and security was only “minimally” impacted by the events of September 11, 2001. Of the 26 respondents who

responded to this question, 57.7% responded that they were “minimally” impacted, 34.6% were impacted “a good amount,” and only 7.7% said that they were “extremely” impacted.

### **Experiences of Discrimination**

A large majority of respondents stated that they had experienced discrimination, microaggressions, stereotyping, hate crimes or hate speech based on their self-identified or perceived ethnic or religious identity. Of the 26 respondents who answered this question, 84.6% stated that they were impacted, whereas only 15.4% said that they were not. Respondents who claimed to be impacted by discrimination, microaggressions, stereotyping, hate crimes or hate speech were asked to specify how many incidents occurred and how severe or upsetting these incidents were. Responses to the number of incidents that respondents had experienced varied. Of this group, 30.4% experienced 1 to 3 incidents, 17.4% experienced 4 to 7 incidents, 21.7% of respondents claimed to have had 8 to 11 incidents, 17.4% had 12 to 15 incidents and 13% experienced 16 or more incidents. Almost all of the respondents were only mildly to moderately upset by these incidents. Fifty percent of respondents found these incidents to be mildly troubling or upsetting, 41.7% were moderately upset, and 8.3% were severely upset.

Table 2 illustrates the types and frequency of instances of discrimination indicated by the respondents. No respondents endorsed experiencing immigration discrimination, police or FBI misconduct, or physical threats or harassment. A small majority of respondents endorsed having experienced airline discrimination or airport profiling and microaggressions. Of the 28 respondents, 53.6% experienced airline discrimination or profiling and 53.6% experienced microaggressions. Less than a third (28.6%) experienced private discrimination or hate crimes and a quarter (25.0%) endorsed experiencing hate speech. Other forms of discrimination were less commonly endorsed: 21.4% experienced public discrimination or civil liberties issues,

14.3% experienced psychological threats and harassment, 14.3% experienced employment discrimination, 3.6% endorsed Patriot Act violations such as indefinite detention, searches, seizures and wire tapping, and 3.6% reported denial of service, discriminatory service or housing discrimination. “Other” responses included “political discrimination” (3.6%, n=1), “workplace discrimination” (3.6%, n=1), and “overheard and witnessed discrimination not directed towards me but directed towards people more outwardly “Arab-American” and “Muslim-American” by name, appearance and vocalized affiliation” (3.6%, n=1). These data are presented in Table 2 following.



**Table 2**

**Types of Discrimination**

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Airline discrimination/airport profiling	53.6%
Microaggressions	53.6%
Private discrimination and hate crimes	28.6%
Hate speech	25.0%
Public discrimination/civil liberties issues	21.4%
Psychological threats and harassment	14.3%
Employment discrimination	14.3%
Patriot Act: indefinite detention, searches, seizures, wire tapping	3.6%
Denial of service, discriminatory service, housing discrimination	3.6%
Educational discrimination or bullying	3.6%
Other	10.8%

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The majority of participants reported feeling targeted by persons whom they were not well acquainted with: 60.7% reported being targeted by stranger(s), 39.3% felt targeted by acquaintance(s), 28.6% felt targeted by the police or government. Only 7.1% felt targeted by friend(s), 3.6% felt targeted by family member(s), and 3.6% felt targeted by employer(s). Table 3 summarizes whom respondents felt targeted by.

**Table 3**

**Persons Who Inflicted Discrimination**

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Stranger(s)	60.7%
Acquaintance(s)	39.3%
Police or government	28.6%
Friend(s)	7.1%
Family member(s)	3.6%
Other: Employer(s)	3.6%

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**Descriptions of Experiences of Discrimination**

Respondents were asked to describe the incidents of discrimination, how they felt about these experiences, and how these incidents impacted them over time. Fourteen respondents answered this question. Many respondents expressed similar concerns. The majority of respondents described hearing stereotypes or discriminatory comments directed at themselves or at their ethnic or religious group. The majority of respondents also described being discriminated against based on their physical appearance or dress. Other themes included experiencing employment or workplace discrimination, and experiencing helpless, passive feelings. I will describe these themes in detail in the following sections.

**Stereotypes and Discriminatory Comments**

Of those who responded to this question, 57.14% spoke about hearing or overhearing discriminatory comments or stereotypes about themselves or other Muslims or Arabs. Many spoke about Arabs and Muslims being stereotyped as terrorists. One respondent described

hearing “references to Muslims as being aggressors and terrorists, who hate the U.S.” Another respondent described asking her students to share “...what they thought of first when they hear about Arabs or Muslims, and nine out of 10 times it would be horrible.” Yet another man shared that he had been spat at and called a terrorist. Yet other respondents described hearing “terrorist” jokes, “hateful comments about Arabs/Muslims,” and discriminatory comments.

### **Discrimination Based on Physical Appearance or Dress**

Another theme among respondents was the experience of being discriminated against based on outward appearance. Of those who responded to this question, 64.29% described incidents of discrimination due to outward appearance, such as enduring extra searches by airport security, or being called a terrorist due to physical characteristics or wearing a hijab (head scarf). Fifty percent of respondents specifically mentioned enduring extra searches when going through airport security. One woman stated:

[I was] asked to remove my hijab in court – as an attorney, that was most troubling. It was disheartening that someone working in our... most sacred grounds, the courts, the places of equality and justice, would ask such a thing!

Respondents also described hearing acquaintances judging others for their outward appearance. One respondent stated that a co-worker was “terrified when she saw a group of Muslim women entering the garage, heading to the mall.” Another respondent described hearing a group yelling at a Sikh taxi cab driver: “[They] told him he was a Muslim terrorist and that he should go back to where he came from. The[y] ignorantly thought his turban was an indication... .”

### **Employment or Workplace Discrimination**

Another theme emerged in the analysis of these responses. Of the respondents, 28.7% expressed experiencing employment discrimination or workplace discrimination. This ranged

from not being hired based on religious beliefs to constant and persistent harassment in the workplace, including false allegations, being fired without stated cause, and being treated differently because of religious beliefs. One respondent described this experience:

I was discriminated against by a co-worker for approximately one year. This included being treated differently, having any of my ideas or suggestions dismissed, insinuations about my faith [...] given a horrible working schedule [...] attempted professional sabotage, horizontal violence, belittling, etc.

Another respondent described an incident of being undermined in the workplace because of her ethnic/religious identity:

Though the most personal attack made directly against me was by someone quite prominent in the DC political world community who believed I should not be promoted to the head of an organization because I am not white and because I'm a woman. I was ultimately promoted, but that person actively undermined me in every way, at every turn.

### **Feelings of Helplessness**

Although no two respondents used the same words to describe how these incidents made them feel, all of them described negative emotions. In particular, most of these words contained a helpless feel to them: “worn out,” “emotionally exhausted,” “disheartening,” “threatened,” “depression,” “unsettling and discouraging.” One respondent captured this feeling with the following statement:

Most of the time I speak up and out myself, but occasionally I hide behind passing as a ‘white person’ because I feel too threatened or I’m just too emotionally exhausted [...] I know I’m not supposed to quit [...] but I’m worn out and don’t feel like I have much fight left in me anymore.

Despite these discouraged sentiments, many respondents seemed to be taking action to remedy their situations, stand up for themselves and for other Arabs and Muslims. Respondents described filing complaints about employer discrimination, stepping into conversations to educate others on Islamic and Arab cultures, moving out of hostile living environments, and “outing” themselves as Muslims or Arabs to teach others about stereotyping and about their cultures.

### **Media Bias, Discriminatory Comments, and Hostile Statements**

Twenty-five respondents answered the question of whether they had felt hurt or targeted by media bias, discriminatory comments by others, or hostile statement directed at their ethnic or religious group since September 11, 2001. Of these respondents, 100.00% stated that they had. Twelve of these respondents wrote about these experiences in detail. Responses fell into three overlapping categories: 1) general ignorance about Arab and Muslim cultures, 2) “lumping” Arabs and Muslims together as one group, and 3) negative portrayal and stereotypes in the media, which often involves the labeling of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists. One respondent described: “People ‘lumped us altogether’ and associated me and my family with people who had ‘hijacked’ our religion.” Another described being “treated as if I am responsible for 9/11 attack.” Two-thirds of respondents described ignorance of Arab and Muslim culture by the media and general public and the portrayal of these cultures in a negative light.

Respondents described being upset, angry, furious, sick, offended, and annoyed by media bias and by discriminatory comments by others. The Discussion chapter following will offer further reflections on these emotions and their possible effect on those who opened the survey for this study but did not complete it.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Discussion**

This study explored the experiences of discrimination among Arab Americans and Muslim Americans in the U.S. following the events of September 11, 2001. The study asked participants to identify whether they had experienced various types of discriminatory behavior since 9/11. They were then asked to describe those instances of discrimination and their thoughts and feelings about them. In addition, the study explored participants' experiences regarding media bias against Arabs and Muslims.

The major findings of this study were: 1) a majority of respondents stated that their sense of safety and security was only minimally impacted by the events of September 11, 2001, 2) a large majority of respondents stated that they had experienced discrimination, microaggressions, stereotyping, hate crimes or hate speech based on their self-identified or perceived ethnic or religious identity since the 9/11 attacks, 3) participants' experiences of discrimination varied, especially regarding type of discrimination and number of incidents of discrimination, but many were targeted by strangers or acquaintances and most were minimally to moderately impacted by these experiences, 4) all participants endorsed being hurt or targeted by media bias, discriminatory comments by others, or hostile statement directed at their ethnic or religious group since September 11, 2001. This chapter will further summarize these findings in the context of the existing literature reviewed in Chapter II. This chapter will also examine the limitations and strengths of this study, the insight gained, and some possible clinical and research implications that may be inferred from this study.

## **Sense of Safety and Security**

Abu-Ras and Abu-Bader (2008) interviewed Arab Americans in New York following the events of September 11, 2001, and found that they expressed fear of hate crimes, anxiety about the future, and had experienced threats to their safety, loss of community, isolation and stigmatization. Of the respondents in this study, 57.7% responded that their sense of safety and security was “minimally” impacted, 34.6% were impacted “a good amount” by the 9/11 attacks.

## **Experiences of Discrimination**

This study found that a large majority of respondents (84.6%) stated that they had experienced discrimination, microaggressions, stereotyping, hate crimes or hate speech based on their self-identified or perceived ethnic or religious identity since September 11, 2001. These results are higher than the existing statistics, probably due to the nature of recruitment for the study. For example, Padela and Heisler (2010) recorded 25% of Arab Americans reported post-September 11 personal or familial abuse and the Arab American Institute Foundation (2002) reported that nearly one in three Arab Americans surveyed had experienced discrimination based on their ethnic identity. Nonetheless, these findings are worth considering since Padela and Heisler (2010) found that experiences of abuse were associated with higher levels of psychological distress, lower levels of happiness and worse health status. Respondents in this study reported 1 to 16 or more experiences of discrimination and over 90% found these experiences to be mildly to moderately upsetting.

## **Types of Discrimination**

Previous studies (Disha, Cavendish & King, 2011; Rousseau, Hassan, & Thombs, 2011; Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2007; Ajrouch, 2004; Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Ibish, 2003; US Commission on Civil Rights, 2003; American Civil Liberties Union, 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2002; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2001; Ibish, 2001, 2003) have documented a rise in discrimination

against Arabs and Muslims since September 11, 2001. Many have noted an increase in hate crimes. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (2007) stated that it received 1,717 reports of hate crimes against Muslims and civil rights complaints in the six months following September 11, 2001. Of this study's respondents, over one in five (or over 20%) reported experiencing civil liberties issues and public discrimination and over one in four (or over 25%) experienced private discrimination or hate crimes. Verinakis (2007) stated that through media coverage and political speeches following 9/11, the U.S. constructed Arabs and Muslims as "others" in order to justify the suspension of their civil liberties. Furthermore, one in four respondents experienced hate speech and 14.3% experienced psychological threats and harassment.

These results seem fairly consistent with the existing literature. Ibish (2003) reported that in the six months following the 9/11 attacks, employment discrimination quadrupled from previous years. This study found that 14.3% of respondents endorsed experiencing employment discrimination. Those who described employment discrimination in the open-ended portion of the study spoke of not being hired based on religious beliefs, to constant and persistent harassment in the workplace, including false allegations, being fired without stated cause, and being treated differently because of religious beliefs. This form of persistent harassment or sabotage is particularly hurtful as it is endured over a length of time, during which these individuals are attempting to retain their jobs. Those who lost their jobs without cause suffered tremendously, especially given the recent state of the U.S. economy.

Over half of respondents experienced airline discrimination or airport profiling and more than half experienced microaggressions. These were also described in detail in the open-ended questions. Respondents spoke of missing flights and regularly enduring additional searches in the airport.



## **Personal Experiences**

The study expands on the current literature on discrimination against Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. in that it focused on personal experiences rather than on quantitative measures and statistics. Whereas many previous studies (Arab American Institute Foundation, 2002; Awad, 2010; Padela & Heisler, 2010; Rousseau, 2010; Disha, 2011) have catalogued and categorized large numbers of discriminatory experiences among Arabs and Muslims, few captured detailed personal accounts of these experiences. By capturing these stories, this study has expanded on our understanding of what these experiences of discrimination have been like for Arabs and Muslims living in the U.S. since September 11, 2001. These personal experiences add to the literature in a way that may aid us as social workers to better understand, empathize with, and advocate for our Arab and Muslim clients who have experienced discrimination.

### **“Terrorist” Stereotyping**

Over half of this study’s respondents endorsed hearing or overhearing discriminatory comments or stereotypes about themselves or other Muslims or Arabs. Many spoke about Arabs and Muslims being stereotyped as terrorists. This is consistent with the literature in the field: Tatum (1997) stated that since the 1960s, Arabs immigrating to the U.S. have been “increasingly impacted by anti-Arab sentiments and ‘terrorist’ stereotyping in the U.S.” (p. 158). Said (1997) describes “exaggerated stereotyping and belligerent hostility” (p. xi). Miller and Garran (2008) state: “The wake of 9/11 has seen many instances of anti-Arab sentiment, stereotyping, and hostility... exacerbated by the unending ‘war on terrorism’” (p. 51).

### **Discrimination Based on Physical Appearance or Dress**

Many respondents in this study experienced discrimination based on outward appearance. Of those who responded to this question, nearly two-thirds described incidents of discrimination due to outward appearance or dress. Although this particular topic has not been explored thoroughly in the literature, it is congruent with findings that Arab and Middle Eastern Americans who are less immersed in dominant society reported higher levels of discrimination (Awad, 2010). According to the Arab American Institute Foundation (2002), some Arab Americans expressed concern about displaying their ethnicity. This is hardly new, as Arab Americans have felt pressures from within and outside of their communities to acculturate. By the mid-1900s, many “identified as white/Caucasian, Anglicized their names, replaced Arabic with English, and restricted their ethnic identity to the private sphere.” This being the case, those who did not “pass as white” were either asserting a cultural identity in response to the “Americanization” of previous generations or those who could not physically appear white, at a time when the U.S. media was portraying Arabs as enemies of the U.S. (Naber, 2000, p. 40-41).

### **Distress and Action**

Whereas Rousseau (2010) and Padela and Heisler (2010) both found that Arabs and Muslims experienced “distress” in response to discrimination, most respondents in this study described feeling more helpless, using words such as: “worn out,” “emotionally exhausted,” “disheartening,” “threatened,” “depression,” “unsettling and discouraging.”

As noted earlier, although fifty-three individuals accessed the online survey, only twenty-eight completed the survey and even fewer responded to the open-ended questions about their particular experiences. Although part of this can be accounted for otherwise, those who did

respond to these questions expressed experiencing such exhaustion and pain in response to their experiences of discrimination; it is very possible that certain respondents may have opted out of these more detailed questions for fear of being triggered, or have omitted the survey altogether.

Despite these sentiments, many respondents described actively working towards advocacy for themselves and others by educating others and filing complaints. The Arab American Institute Foundation (2002) described a different kind of advocacy. They found that eight out of 10 Arab Americans hung American flags, donated blood, and contributed to funds for victims of 9/11 to pledge their allegiance to the U.S. while maintaining pride in their Arab ethnicities.

### **Media Bias**

All respondents in this study endorsed feeling hurt or targeted by media bias, discriminatory comments by others, or hostile statements directed at their ethnic or religious group since September 11, 2001. Many respondents described the “lumping” together of Arabs and Muslims. This echoes the literature. Naber (2000) states that following World War II, the “[U.S.] media began to portray Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslims as a monolithic category and as one of the pre-eminent enemies of the West” (p. 41).

### **Future Areas of Research**

Due to time limitations, this study was further limited by its small sample size. The sample was diverse in race, ethnicity, countries of origin, parents’ nationalities, and religion. However, a larger sample size would allow for more generalizability. I was concerned that the sample would be skewed towards a younger age because of my sampling of personal contacts; however, the group was fairly diverse in age. More time would also have allowed for interviews, which could delve further into the details of personal experiences and would have provided a

richer picture of the ways in which discrimination impacts Muslims and Arabs in their daily lives.

For the purposes of this study, participants were limited to American citizens and adults over the age of 18. Further investigations are needed to capture the diversity of such a broad inclusive group of individuals. Despite the ways in which the media depicts Muslims and Arabs as being equivalent, these groups overlap but are not the same. As stated earlier, Arab is an extremely inclusive term that includes individuals from many countries. Muslims are also a very racially and geographically diverse group, including persons from the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and other places. The study would have benefited from the addition of individuals who were not American citizens and moved to the United States more recently. Another added dimension would have been hearing from adolescents under the age of 18 who were children when September 11<sup>th</sup> occurred. Would there be a difference between those who remember the events of that day or were in the U.S. at the time, and those who do not?

The sample for this study was biased in that participants who accessed the survey through the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee are people who identify with their ethnic identity and who are generally motivated to change the way Arabs are portrayed in the media and improve the ways in which Arabs are treated by society. This differs from a group who had not considered their ethnic identity or the ways in which Arabs are treated differently based on their ethnic identity.

I am also curious about how this study would have been impacted if it had included individuals who did not identify as Arab or Muslim but who had felt more targeted by discrimination following September 11, 2001, since according the literature, there are individuals who could be considered Arab American who do not identify with

this Pan-Arab term. Having read other studies, I am aware that there have been many occurrences where individuals who are not Arab or Muslim have been discriminated against by others who ignorantly reference them as terrorists, such as Sikhs or Latinos or other persons with tan or olive toned skin. It would have been interesting to hear this perspective in the study and examine whether these experiences are comparable to those of Muslims and Arabs.

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**APPENDIX A**

**Letter of consent to distribute survey from ADC**

To: Lenna Jawdat <[REDACTED]>

From: Nabil Mohamad <organizing@adc.org>

Tuesday, January 24, 2012 at 1:42 PM

Dear Lenna,

Thank you for contacting the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) with your request. As a Civil Rights organization with members across the country, ADC will support your project by circulating the survey to members and friends who may be interested in this topic. As you know, ADC was founded over 30 years ago to defend and promote human rights, civil rights, and liberties of Arab Americans and others. Please let us know how we should proceed.

Sincerely,

Nabil Mohamad

Vice President

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Recruitment Email and Facebook Invitation**

Dear Colleagues,

Will you please help me find participants to complete a survey for my thesis? I am conducting a study that explores experiences of Arab-American and Muslim American individuals who have experienced ethnic or religious discrimination, including microaggressions ("everyday insults, indignities and demeaning messages sent to people of color by well-intentioned white people who are unaware of the hidden messages being sent to them")\*, stereotyping, and ethnic violence following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in 2001. I am looking for English-speaking adults, 18 years and older, who are U.S. citizens and would be willing to share their personal stories of discrimination. The data I collect will be used for my Master's degree thesis, presentation, and possible publications. Would you please forward this message to anyone you know who might be interested in completing my survey? The survey consists of multiple choice and open answer questions and may take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and for your help!

Please click on this Link to take my survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VMQQQHL>

Lenna Jawdat  
MSW Student  
Smith College School for Social Work

\*Sue, D. W. as quoted in DeAngelis, T. (2009). Unmasking 'racial micro aggressions'. *Monitor on Psychology*, 40(2), p. 42. American Psychological Association. Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2009/02/microaggression.aspx>

## APPENDIX C

### Survey

**Q1 Are you an English-speaking U.S. citizen over the age of 18 who identifies as Arab-American or Muslim American and have experienced discrimination based on these facets of your identity following September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001?**

(Yes) (No)\*

*\*If no, you are not eligible to participate in the study, as I am able only to enroll those who speak English and are over 18 years old and self-identify as belonging at least in part to the ethnic/religious groups who are the subjects of my study. I thank you, though, for your interest in my research. [Prospective participants who are not eligible are thus thanked and re-directed out of the survey]*

**Q2 What is your self-identified Race/Ethnicity (please check all that apply)?**

(African-American/Black)

(Native American)

(Arab-American)

(Non-Hispanic White)

(Asian-American or Pacific Islander)

(Hispanic or Latino/a)

(Bi-racial or Multi-ethnic, please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

(other: please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

(Middle-Eastern)

**Q3 What is your self-identified gender?**

(Male)

(Female)

(Transgender)

(Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**Q4 What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Q5 In what country were you born?**

(United States)      (Other: please specify \_\_\_\_\_)\*

**Q6 How many years have you lived in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Q7 In what country was your father born?**

(United States)      (Other: please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**Q8 In what country was your mother born?**

(United States)      (Other: please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**Q9 What is your religious identification?**

(Christian)                      (Jewish)                      (Buddhist)  
(Atheist or Agnostic)      (Muslim)                      (other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**Q10 How much--if any--have the events of 9/11 shaken your own personal sense of safety and security?<sup>1</sup>**

(Not at all)      (Minimally)      (A good amount)      (Extremely)

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<sup>1</sup> Question obtained from Padela, A. I. and Heisler, M. (2010). The association of perceived abuse and discrimination after September 11, 2001, with psychological distress, level of happiness, and health status among Arab Americans. *American Journal of Public Health, 100*(2), 284-291. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2009.164954

**Q11 Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, have you experienced discrimination, microaggressions ("everyday insults, indignities and demeaning messages sent to people of color by well-intentioned white people who are unaware of the hidden messages being sent to them")<sup>2</sup>, stereotyping, hate crimes or hate speech based on your self-identified identity, or what others perceive to be your ethnic or religious identity?**

(Yes) (No)\*

*\*If no, move on to question Q16*

**Q12 If yes, how many times did an incident occur?**

(1-3 times) (4-7 times) (8-11 times) (12- 15 times) (16+ times)

**Q13 Please rate the severity according to how upsetting or severe your experiences have been**

(mildly troubling or upsetting) (moderately upsetting) (severely upsetting)

**Q14 What kinds of experiences have you had post-9/11- check all that apply**

A.  Airline discrimination/airport profiling

B.  Public discrimination/civil liberties issues

B1.  Immigration discrimination, including but not limited to “voluntary interviews,” secret detentions, hearings, and deportations

B2.  USA Patriot Act: indefinite detention, searches, seizures, wire tapping, etc.

B3.  Police or FBI misconduct

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<sup>2</sup> \*Sue, D. W. as quoted in DeAngelis, T. (2009). Unmasking 'racial micro aggressions'. *Monitor on Psychology*, 40(2), p. 42. American Psychological Association. Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2009/02/microaggression.aspx>

C. Private discrimination and hate crimes

C1. \_\_Physical threats and harassment, including vandalism, battery, and suspected or confirmed hate crime murder

C2. \_\_Psychological threats and harassment

C3. \_\_Hate speech

C4. \_\_Denial of service, discriminatory service, housing discrimination

C5. \_\_Employment discrimination

C6. \_\_Educational discrimination or bullying

C. 7. \_\_Microaggressions such as being avoided, excluded, slighted, or otherwise discounted or demeaned in subtle but hurtful ways

D. Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**Q15 Please specify whom you felt targeted by & describe the experience below**

\_\_friend(s)

\_\_family member(s)

\_\_acquaintance(s)

\_\_teacher(s), classmate(s), or co-worker(s)

\_\_stranger(s)

\_\_police or the government

\_\_Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please describe the incident(s), how you felt about it, and the impact it had over time:**

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**Q16 After the 9/11 attacks, did you feel targeted or hurt by media bias, discriminatory comments by others, or hostile statements directed at your ethnic or religious group?**

(Yes) (No)\*

*\*If no, participation in the survey is complete*

**Q17 Please describe what was said, how you felt about it, and the impact it had over time:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX D

### Smith College School for Social Work HSRC Approval Letter



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**School for Social Work**  
Smith College  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063  
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

February 25, 2012

Lenna Jawdat

Dear Lenna,

You did a very nice job on your revisions and your project is now approved.

*Please note the following requirements:*

**Consent Forms:** All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

**Maintaining Data:** You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

*In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:*

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

**Renewal:** You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

**Completion:** You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David L. Burton'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

David L. Burton, M.S.W., Ph.D.  
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee  
CC: Gael McCarthy, Research Advisor

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Informed Consent Form**

Dear Participant,

My name is Lenna Jawdat and I am a Master of Social Work graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work. I am conducting a study that explores the experiences of Arab-American and Muslim American persons who have felt discrimination, including microaggressions ("everyday insults, indignities and demeaning messages sent to people of color by well-intentioned white people who are unaware of the hidden messages being sent to them")\*, stereotyping, and ethnic violence following the 9/11 attacks. I am looking for participants who are willing to share their personal stories of their experienced discrimination. The data I collect will be used for my Master's thesis, and possible future publications, and presentations.

If you give your consent to participate in this study, you will click "I AGREE" below to begin the survey. The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. It will start with asking you for some information about yourself such as age, gender, religious affiliation, etc. (so that I may accurately describe my participants when completing the thesis report), and move on to asking about your experiences of discrimination. You may decide to end your participation at any time, but after your answers are submitted, it will be impossible for me to identify your data in order to remove it, since the internet survey encrypts all identifying information about participants. I will be unable to know which responses belong to any individual participant. When the survey is complete, it will close and your responses will be submitted.

Responding to some of the survey questions may cause emotional discomfort or bring up negative memories. I will be providing a list of referral sources to national organizations with lists of potential counselors that you might wish to consult in order to help if this is the case. On the other hand, speaking about these experiences in a confidential way may be a relieving experience and may help you to reflect on these experiences. It may also be satisfying to know that your experiences, as expressed in this study, will help others understand the extent of ethnic discrimination in a way that will educate professionals. I am unable to offer money or other tangible benefits for your participation, but I hope that the opportunity to share your experiences may be of use to you.

By giving your informed consent, you are giving permission to use the data you provide in response to this survey. Quantitative responses (where options are given) will be kept anonymous, and (as noted above) the internet survey provider removes your personal identifying information before I receive the results. My research advisor will have access to the de-identified data in order to help with the analysis, but the advisor will keep any identifying information confidential. I will transcribe and analyze my own data, so that no one else has access to these data. When presenting data from my study, I will present information as a whole, summarizing my research rather than what you have said individually. If I present brief illustrative quotes or vignettes, I will disguise them so that you cannot be identified from the information presented.

**PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY IS VOLUNTARY. AT ANY TIME DURING THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS, YOU MAY CHOOSE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY BY EXITING THE SURVEY. YOU ARE WELCOME TO REFUSE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTION THAT YOU ARE NOT COMFORTABLE ANSWERING WITHOUT WITHDRAWING FROM THE STUDY AS A WHOLE. AFTER SUBMITTING YOUR**

SURVEY, I CANNOT REMOVE YOUR RESULTS FROM THE STUDY, SINCE (AGAIN) I WILL HAVE NO WAY OF IDENTIFYING THEM. IF YOU HAVE ANY ADDITIONAL CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS OR OTHER ASPECTS OF THE STUDY, PLEASE CONTACT ME OR THE CHAIR OF THE SMITH COLLEGE SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL WORK HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE AT (413) 585-7974.

Please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] should you have any questions or concerns. I suggest that you keep a copy of this form for your own records. Thank you again for your interest in my study, and your participation, if you choose to continue.

Best,

Lenna Jawdat

\*Sue, D. W. as quoted in DeAngelis, T. (2009). Unmasking 'racial micro aggressions'. *Monitor on Psychology*, 40(2), p. 42. American Psychological Association. Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2009/02/microaggression.aspx>

**By checking “I AGREE” below, you are indicating that you have read and understand the above information and that you have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study, your participation, and your rights and that you agree to participate in the study.**

     **I AGREE**

## APPENDIX F

### Resources for Participants

#### Therapy service locators

-American Psychological Association:

Web site: <http://locator.apa.org/>

Telephone: 800-374-2723

TDD/TTY: 202-336-6123

-Sidran Institute's Help Desk

Phone: 410-825-8888

Email: [help@sidran.org](mailto:help@sidran.org)

-Anxiety Disorders Association of America

Phone: 240-485-1001

Web site: <http://www.adaa.org/findatherapist>

-Association for Behavioral Cognitive Therapies

Web site: [http://www.abct.org/Members/?m=FindTherapist&fa=FT\\_Form&nolm=1](http://www.abct.org/Members/?m=FindTherapist&fa=FT_Form&nolm=1)

Telephone: 212-647-1890

-EMDR International Association

Web site: <http://emdria.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=17>

Telephone: 866.451.5200

-Psychology Today

Web site: [http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms/prof\\_search.php](http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms/prof_search.php)

-Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Web site: <http://store.samhsa.gov/mhlocator>

Telephone: 1-877-SAMHSA-7

-Help Starts Here

Web site: <http://www.helpstartshere.org/find-a-social-worker>

-HelpPro Therapist Finder

Web site: <http://www.helppro.com/>

Telephone: 781-862-5215

-HelpPro Social Worker Finder  
Web site: <http://www.helppro.com/nasw/BasicSearch.aspx>  
Telephone: 781-862-5215

-NetworkTherapy.com  
Web site: <http://www.networktherapy.com/directory/>

#### Anti-discrimination resources

-American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee  
Web site: [www.adc.org](http://www.adc.org)  
Telephone: 202-244-2990

-U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
Web site: [eeoc.gov](http://eeoc.gov)  
Telephone (for the charge filing process): 1-800-669-4000  
Or 1-800-669-6820 (TTY)

-United States Commission on Civil Rights  
Web site: [usccr.gov](http://usccr.gov)  
Telephone: 1-800-552-6843 or (202) 376-8513  
Hearing impaired: 1-800-877-8339  
E-Mail: [referrals@usccr.gov](mailto:referrals@usccr.gov)

-US Department of Justice, Action Center  
Web site: <http://www.justice.gov/crs/>

#### Educational discrimination

Telephone: 877-292-3804 or 202 514-4092  
Fax: 202-514-8337

Employment discrimination Contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Telephone (voice): 800-669-4000  
Telephone (TTY): 800-669-6820

#### Housing discrimination

Telephone: 800-896-7743  
E-mail: [fairhousing@usdoj.gov](mailto:fairhousing@usdoj.gov)

Complaints against institutions (Jails, prisons, juvenile facilities, developmental disability/mental retardation facilities, mental health facilities or nursing homes)  
Web site: <http://www.justice.gov/crt/publications/natorigin2.php#law>

National origin discrimination Information available in: [Arabic](#), [Cambodian](#); [Chinese](#); [English](#); [French](#); [Haitian Creole](#); [Hindi](#); [Hmong](#); [Korean](#); [Laotian](#); [Punjabi](#); [Russian](#); [Spanish](#); [Tagalog](#); [Urdu](#); and [Vietnamese](#)

Web site: <http://www.justice.gov/crt/publications/natorigin2.php>

#### State or local law enforcement agencies

#### Voting rights discrimination

Telephone: 800-253-3931

E-mail: [Voting.Section@usdoj.gov](mailto:Voting.Section@usdoj.gov)

-Educational Equity Center

Web site: [edequity.org](http://edequity.org)

Telephone: 212-243-1110

-American Civil Liberties Union

Web site: [aclu.org](http://aclu.org)

Telephone: 212-549-2500

-Office for Victims of Crime, Directory of Crime Victim Services

Web site: <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices>