

Bridging Cultural Divides: Efficacy Of Dialogue and Multicultural Education in Reducing Ant-Muslim and Anti-Arab Bias in the U.S.

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Abstract:

Discrimination against Muslims and Arabs has emerged as a significant concern in numerous multicultural societies, impacting social cohesion and individual well-being. The events of September 11, 2001, marked a pivotal moment for Arab/Muslim Americans, highlighting their prominence in the national discourse. Scholarly research has primarily focused on the political, social, and economic ramifications of these events on this minority group, with a limited exploration of strategies to mitigate the resultant bias and racism. This study evaluates the efficacy of interracial communication, interethnic dialogue, and multicultural education in reducing bias against Arab and Muslim populations in the United States. This study analyzed data from studies involving participants in direct contact, dialogue, and multicultural education programs designed to foster understanding and empathy. The findings demonstrate a notable reduction in anti-Arab/Muslim bias among respondents, positively correlating with the intensity of interventions and education. Intergroup communication and multicultural education appear to be effective in promoting social cohesion and reducing intergroup conflict, discrimination, Islamophobia, and xenophobia. These findings have significant implications for educators, policymakers, and community leaders, who aim to cultivate a more inclusive society. Further research is warranted to assess the long-term effects and to provide a framework for implementing these practices in diverse contexts.

Keywords: *Arabs/Muslims, Multicultural education, Prejudice reduction, Cultural integration, Islamophobia, Intergroup contact.*

Introduction

Religious liberty and diversity have long been US characteristics; however, religious minorities have faced bigotry and marginalization throughout the nation's history. As the nation accepted Catholics, Jews, Mormons, and atheists, White Protestant culture remained central to American identity. After the September 11th terrorist attacks, political events and public attitudes

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shaped the lives of Arab and Muslim Americans. These populations have greatly enriched the US ethnic fabric, yet their contributions and experiences are frequently disregarded. To understand the Muslim experience in Western nations, one must analyze prejudice, anti-Muslim sentiment, and discriminatory acts, as well as mitigating efforts, including interfaith discussion and intercultural education strategies designed to overcome them.

Research Context

Recently, anti-Muslim and anti-Arab prejudices have increased, harming society and individuals' well-being. Given worldwide migration and cultural diversity, minimizing prejudice and increasing intercultural understanding is crucial for building a more inclusive and cohesive society. Studies have connected the media, historical and political discourse, and intergroup contact with anti-Muslim and anti-Arab prejudices in the US. However, most of those studies have examined how cross-group contact and education might reduce prejudice towards African Americans, Hispanics, Jews, and Catholics, excluding Arabs/Muslims from most of them due to their relative invisibility, particularly prior to 9/11. Intercultural discourse and diversity education may lessen bias towards Muslim and Arab populations, although there is little evidence to support this. This study investigates how dialogue and intercultural education can reduce anti-Muslim and anti-Arab prejudice and how schools, mosques, and minority organizations can promote cohesiveness, tolerance, and mutual respect among the dominant U.S. majority and other minority groups.

Key Concepts

This study investigates the concepts of xenophobia, prejudice, stereotypes, Islamophobia, Arabophobia and the challenges to multiculturalism within the American context. These interrelated concepts offer a framework for examining and analyzing anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiments. The following are concise definitions of the terms explored in this study and their prevalence in academic discourse.

Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education

Multiculturalism advocates the equitable coexistence of diverse cultural groups within a cohesive society, promoting the inclusion and integration of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and racial groups (Watts, 2007, p.166). It acknowledges the rights and identities of ethnic minorities and embraces cultural diversity (Kymlicka, 1996). The Banks' multicultural educational approach aims to mitigate prejudice, empower students, and facilitate their appreciation of diverse groups and perspectives. It is conceptualized as a reform movement and process designed to transform institutions, reduce prejudice, and integrate content (Banks 1993, 1994).

Islamophobia

Islamophobia, a phrase that originated in the late 1990s, signifies animosity

towards Islam and Muslims in Western countries. After the events of 11 September 2001, it emerged as the primary word for discrimination against Muslim minorities, leading to a heightened scholarly focus. Islamophobia studies have investigated theological, social, cultural, historical, and political elements that contribute to anti-Muslim bias (Green, 2019). Halliday (1999) notes that while historical prejudices targeted Islam as a belief system, current biases targeted individuals who identified themselves as Muslims. Samari et al. (2018) described it as a social stigma, political hostility, and a manifestation of xenophobia and racism. Erdenir (2010) employs the term “Muslimophobia” to denote hostility towards Muslims instead. The Runnymede Trust Report (1997) characterized Islamophobia as a significant aversion, fear, and hostility towards Muslims and Islam. In contrast, Wajahat et al. (2011) delineated it as an extreme fear and animosity towards Islam and Muslims fueled by detrimental stereotypes that result in prejudice, discrimination, and marginalization. Esposito and Mogahed (2007) defined Islamophobia as fear or animosity towards Islam or Muslims, evident in physical violence, hate speech, and discriminatory actions.

Arabophobia

Arabophobia, marked by discrimination, hostility, and pejorative language, is a variant of both racism and xenophobia (Said, 1978). In the United States, Arabs, Arabism, Arab nationalism, and Islam have negative connotations (Abu-Laban et al., 1975; Ghareeb, 1983). In modern American society, anti-Arab sentiments and Islamophobia intensify adverse perceptions of Arabs and Muslims. This aversion employs the “clash of civilizations” discourse, creating dichotomies between “barbarism” and “civilization,” “modern” and “medieval,” or “backward” and “primitive” (Huntington, 1996). Similarly, Western people often portray Arabs as irrational and uncivilized while portraying the West as rational, intellectual and cultured (Said, 1978).

Discrimination

The Oxford English Dictionary of Politics defines discrimination as the inequitable treatment of individuals based on race, gender, age, or sexual orientation (Maclean et al., 2018). Scholars have characterized discrimination as unfavorable actions directed towards individuals from various groups (Harnois, 2023; Kassin et al., 2011). Individuals and institutions, often rooted in prejudice and animosity, may maintain discrimination, leading to behaviours such as hate speech, denial of equal opportunities, and physical assault (Awan & Zempi, 2016; Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; Mohajan, 2018).

Prejudice

Prejudice is a harmful disposition towards particular groups, frequently built on baseless associations and stereotypes, leading to unfair treatment and discrimination. Dovidio et al. (2010) defined prejudice as a negative bias

towards outgroups that leads to a preference for in-group members. Allport (1954) characterizes prejudice as “an antipathy based on erroneous and rigid generalization” (p. 10). Allport (1954) and Baldwin (2017) explained that the effects of prejudice are complex, holding the historical, social, situational, psychodynamic, and phenomenological dimensions that shape perception.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes serve as cognitive heuristics or generalizations for individuals within groups, leading to bias and discrimination (Dovidio et al., 2010). Stereotyping is a characteristic of perceived social groups, influenced by societal attitudes (Puddifoot, 2021), and originates from sources such as the media, society, and education. Negative stereotypes primarily foster biased attitudes and discriminatory behaviors, thereby perpetuating racism (Allport, 1954; Blauner, 1972; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Ridley, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

Understanding Intergroup Conflicts and Bias

Humans are naturally inclined to create social connections and are attracted to shared practices, beliefs, mythologies, faiths, and modes of communication. This intrinsic social trait clarifies the various divisions in the world, including those based on religious beliefs, national identities, political affiliations, racial backgrounds, ethnic origins, and economic status. Social groups significantly influence the formation of human identity and individuals' choices regarding their lifestyle. Although cultural, ethnic, and racial differences do not inherently result in conflict, interactions among diverse groups can occasionally foster hostility rather than peaceful coexistence.

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) posits that various elements play a role in advancing intergroup animosity. Being part of a group offers psychological benefits such as belonging, support, shared responsibilities, and common values (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). It also enhances self-esteem, individuality, and confidence (Abrams & Luhtanen, 1990; Abrams & Hogg, 1988). Social Identity Theory posits that affiliations with groups influence identities, leading to group favoritism and a distinction from others (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This concept relates to Arab and Muslim Americans, who experience marginalization from the White Majority, leading to discrimination. Ellmers et al. (1999) outlined four challenges to social identity: negative categorization, loss of distinctiveness, devaluation of social identity, and exclusion (pp. 35–38). Arab and Muslim Americans frequently encounter discrimination on some or all of these bases but continue to work toward recognition and inclusion through interfaith dialogue, activism, and community involvement.

In another respect, Intergroup Threat Theory (ITT) suggests that prejudice and discrimination arise from the perceived threats faced by outgroups, including immigrants and minorities. These dangers incorporate realistic

threats, such as resource scarcity, and symbolic threats, such as the erosion of culture or values (Stephan et al., 2005). Negative stereotypes are perceptions maintained by dominant groups, whereas intergroup anxiety pertains to anxiety regarding other groups (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). This study addresses the tensions between Arab/Muslim Americans and the White Majority¹, as well as other minorities in the United States, particularly in the aftermath of 11 September 2001. Together, these theories clarify the dynamics of intergroup interactions and the persistent presence of Islamophobia and anti-Arab sentiment.

The SIT suggests that increased race, ethnicity, and cultural diversity often result in heightened intergroup tensions, competition, and bias (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 1979). However, social psychology research suggests that close touch and proximity during intergroup interactions can promote mutual affinity, familiarity, and decreased prejudice. Engagement with individuals from marginalized groups, whether in direct contact or through indirect means, can significantly shape attitudes (Allport, 1954; Harmon-Jones & Allen, 2001). Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory, or hypotheses (ICT) (1954), highlights the importance of interaction in diminishing intergroup prejudice, and subsequent studies (e.g., Harmon-Jones & Allen, 2001) indicate that increased exposure to feared groups may promote familiarity and positive feelings. Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis (1945) posits that interactions among diverse social groups can diminish intergroup prejudice when conditions are met, including equal status, shared goals, cooperative efforts, and support from authorities.

In other words, enhanced contact, communication, and education can alleviate tensions within diverse communities. Constructive intergroup contact cultivates empathy and mitigates prejudice, fostering positive sentiments toward individuals from different social groups (Pettigrew et al., 2011). Such interactions enhance mutual understanding and perceptions of individuals outside one's group. Banks's (1993) five dimensions of intercultural education build upon Allport's foundational premise, indicating that genuine comprehension of another ethnic group can reduce prejudice and stereotyping while increased familiarity with outgroups lessens antagonism.

Gudykunst's Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) scheme (1998) supports these assertions, interpreting cross-cultural and interethnic communication dynamics. Gudykunst (1998) argued that individuals should enhance their communication through deliberate competence to prevent interethnic miscommunication—which can lead to stereotyping and discrimination. This entails intentional engagement and purposeful efforts to improve interethnic communication skills. The classroom environment is optimal for acquiring these competencies, enabling students to apply similar

strategies to broader social contexts as they mature.

Historical overview of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab prejudices

Demographics

Arab and Muslim Americans have made significant contributions to American society over time. Between 1880 and 1924, millions of Arabs migrated to the United States. A survey by John Zogby Strategies for the Arab American Institute (AAI) indicates that there are currently approximately 3.7 million Arab Americans (Stephan, 2021). Orientalist perspectives, colonialism, Cold War dynamics, and narratives surrounding the “clash of civilizations” have portrayed these cultures as threats to Western values, leading to immigration restrictions, social marginalization, and media portrayals that associate Arab and Muslim identities with radicalism and terrorism.

Islam is the third-largest religion in the US, after Christianity and Judaism. A 2009 Gallup poll indicated that American Muslims represent one of the most racially diverse religious groups in the country. According to a 2017 Pew Research Center report, approximately 3.45 million Muslim Americans comprise 1.1% of the U.S. population (Besheer, 2018). Sunni Muslims account for 73% of the American Muslim population, while Shia Muslims represent 16%. Non-denominational Muslims, including adherents of the Nation of Islam and Ahmadis, comprise the remaining minorities. The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) reported that 26% of American Muslims are white, 18% are Asian, 18% are Arab, 9% are black, 7% are mixed-race, and 5% are Hispanic. Approximately 72% of American Muslims are either immigrants or second-generation Americans (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017).

From Xenophobia to Arabophobia and Islamophobia

The ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’ mindset exemplifies the psychological factors that contribute to bias (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping (Allport, 1954; Blauner, 1972), and intergroup conflicts (Stephan & Stephan, 2000, 2017). These sentiments arise from xenophobia; in the case of Arabs, regardless of faith, they can be attributed to Arabophobia. Herbst (1997) defined xenophobia as profound mistrust or animosity towards groups perceived as different, particularly concerning nationality. Xenophobia, derived from Greek, he explains, means “fear of strangers” and denotes the “fear or hatred of anything foreign or external to one’s group, nation, or culture.” This encompasses prejudice and ethnocentrism, which can intensify nationalism (p. 235).

Arabophobia and Islamophobia represent racial prejudices fundamentally influenced by cultural, religious, and political factors. Arabophobia - an irrational fear, hostility, or prejudice towards Arabs- often stems from negative media portrayals, historical conflicts, and geopolitical tensions (Salaita, 2006; Shaheen, 2003; Said,1978). Salaita (2006) posits that

Arabophobia, referred to as 'anti-Arab racism' in American society, has been ingrained in Western culture since the Crusades. Today, Arab individuals like Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden serve to incite fear (Clark, 2003). Neo-conservatism influences the development of both intentional and unintentional Arabophobia in Western media (Shaheen, 2003). Arabophobia results in discrimination across various sectors, including employment, housing, education, and social interactions, and can lead to violence, which were incidents that have faced earlier Arab immigrants to the US.

Adaptation, Integration, and Racialization

Historically, Muslim Americans were marginalized and discriminated against before 9/11 despite their historical ties to the US, notably enslaved Africans. Even though US founders allowed Muslim religious liberty and numerous cities had considerable Muslim populations, today's majority's misunderstanding of Islamic customs created discrimination. Islam is related to "cultural" racism regardless of race (Alexander, 2006). Muslim Arab immigrants (Christian Arabs, to a lesser extent) are typically considered outsiders who do not follow civic norms. Muslims are labelled "foreign, misogynistic, and hostile" due to unfamiliarity (Garner & Selod, 2014; Sides & Gross, 2013). Post-9/11 anti-Muslim and anti-Arab prejudice mirror Jewish, Catholic, and Black marginalization.

As a country of immigrants, the US has a history of religious and cultural discrimination, with outgroup attitudes impeding Arab and Muslim acceptance variables. Many Americans consider Islam as "retro, violent, and bigoted," whereas Western culture is "modern, civic, and civilized" (Esposito, 1999; Said, 1978; Shaheen, 2003). In the US, Arabs/Muslims are alienated owing to their religion, color, and culture. Their preconceptions have been intensified by media depictions and historical events, including the Arab-Israeli War, the Iranian Hostage Crisis, and the Persian Gulf War (Khoury, 1987; Reich, 2011). According to Jackson (2010), American media portrayals of Islam perpetuate negative perceptions; thus, educators must confront these prejudices in order to encourage inclusiveness. Post-9/11 media clichés have fueled misperceptions of Muslim culture and religion, causing unwarranted anxiety.

Arabs, Europeans, Middle Easterners, and North Africans were formerly considered White by the US. Discrimination against Arabs and Muslims increased after 9/11 due to cultural and religious disparities (Grosfoguel, 2012; Said, 1978). US Protestant nationalism, founded in colonial times, has marginalized other faiths (Feagin, 2006). Western "experts" use orientalist preconceptions to misinterpret Muslim beliefs, perpetuating the illusory contradiction between Islam and democracy (Said, 1978). Arab Americans are proud of their ancestry and language. However, as outsiders, their Middle

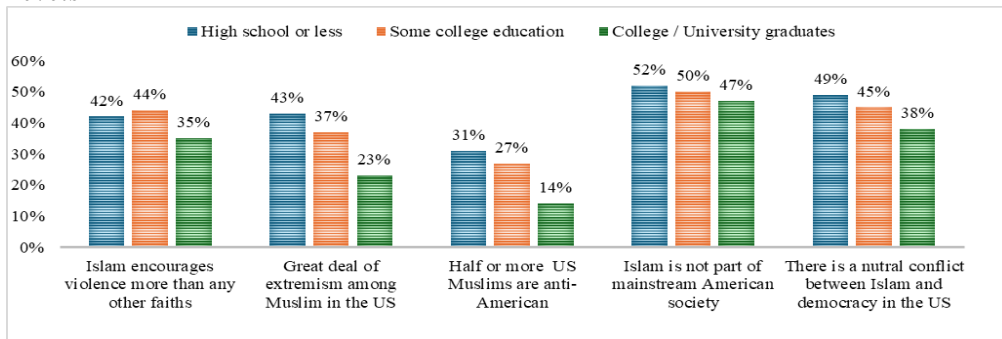
Eastern heritage may lead to discrimination, violence, and political marginalization (Abraham, 1994; Wingfield, 2006). These interactions demonstrate how biases and misconceptions hinder Arab-American integration and acceptance.

Clash of Civilizations or Clash of Ignorance

Cultural ignorance should also be targeted. Misrepresentation and a lack of knowledge of Islam have led to Islamophobia in the West (Abbasi, 2022; Pratt, 2011). Said (2001) criticizes the “Clash of Civilizations” theory² for using misconceptions and stereotypes to boost self-esteem rather than promote global understanding. Despite proof that non-Muslims commit most terrorist attacks, anti-Muslim political rhetoric, media depictions, and the false association of Islam with terrorism continue to fuel Islamophobia. A 2017 Pew Research Centre poll found that lower-educated Americans were more hostile towards Muslims and Islam. **Fig.01** shows that college/university graduates feel “the majority of Muslim Americans are anti-America” and “Islam is not part of mainstream American society” less than high school graduates.

As a consequence of the 9/11 attacks, nations with low Muslim populations have also experienced the proliferation of extremist ideologies that misrepresent Islam, fostered Islamophobia, and emphasized the importance of studying religion, history, and culture under the premise that ignorance is a significant contributing factor to many conflicts. This contradicts Huntington’s (1996, 2013) “The Clash of Civilizations” claims that culture causes conflict. Schmidt (1997) and Dalrymple (2008) believe cultures are distinct and equal, not hierarchical, whereas Said’s (2001) “Clash of Ignorance” claims that ignorance of other cultures and faiths causes conflict.

Figure 1. Americans’ View of Muslims and Islam Based on Varying Educational Levels



Source: Data adapted from Pew Research Center (2017, p.129): *US Muslims Concerned About Their Place in Society but Continue to Believe in the American Dream.* <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/07/U.S.-MUSLIMS-FULL-REPORT.pdf>

Stereotypes, fear, prejudice, and animosity result from ignorance of Islam and Muslims (Said 2001). This ignorance simplifies negative portrayals,

reduces diversity awareness, and promotes conflicts. Said (2001) and Esposito (1999) say that Islamophobia arises from intercultural mistrust and the rejection of Islamic values. To coexist, pluralistic communities must appreciate their diverse perspectives and cultures. Islam promotes pluralism and tolerance (Sachedina, 2001), and according to Asani (2003) and Eid and Karim (2012), Western Islamic disagreements stem from "religious illiteracy" and cultural ignorance.

Lack of knowledge about Islam and Muslims fuels Islamophobia. Western ignorance and Islamophobia decrease with education and intercultural exchanges. Educational programs can combat these preconceptions, foster tolerance, and diminish Islamophobia (Banks, 1994; Noor & Siregar, 2013; Wai-Yip, 2008). The West should realize that Islam does not attack Christianity or Western ideals. Islam promotes respect, social cohesiveness, tolerance, and cohabitation with liberal democratic ideals (Abdul Rauf, 2004; Asani, 2003; March 2007; Sachedina, 2001; Swaine, 2003), which needs education that opens communication and critical thinking, reduces ignorance and prejudice, and promotes a more educated world.

Literature Review

Group communication and multicultural education effectively mitigate global prejudice, bias, and negative attitudes. Research indicates that establishing intergroup connections during childhood is essential for shaping the identities and personalities of children in diverse societies, as they frequently develop negative attitudes towards individuals who are unfamiliar with them. Camicia (2007) noted that the combination of multicultural education and intergroup contact significantly reduces bias among children as they form biased attitudes towards those they perceive as different.

Killen et al. (2021) contend that positive cross-group friendships during childhood can help alleviate the enduring effects of racism, discrimination, and prejudice that carry into adulthood. They emphasize that intergroup prejudice often arises before adulthood and even before elementary school, thereby contributing to systemic racism. Consequently, they underscore the significance of intergroup friendships in promoting children's well-being and diminishing prejudice across racial, national, and religious groups. In 2023, Nasie suggested that educational programs that include ideas such as different ways of seeing things, cultural similarities, lowering stereotypes and biases, and encouraging intergroup attraction can help create a welcoming space, lower biases, and improve attitudes between groups, all of which will lead to the best possible learning experience.

Hjerm et al. (2018) found that cultivating critical thinking skills alongside multicultural education is vital for reducing anti-immigrant attitudes among adolescents, particularly in schools certified by teachers. Their research

demonstrated that instruction related to xenophobia and racism positively influenced attitudes, except for critical engagement with religion and culture. This finding underscores the importance of intergroup contact and educational initiatives beyond childhood in enhancing societal harmony and tolerance. The presence of religious and cultural disparities, combined with resource scarcity, can lead to prejudice, xenophobia, and racism towards immigrants. However, they also present evidence suggesting that interfaith dialogues and cross-cultural experiences can diminish prejudice and discrimination. Van Assche et al. (2023) observed that such interactions reduced bias and fostered trust and positive attitudes in both Western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic (WEIRD) nations and non-WEIRD countries, among both advantaged and disadvantaged populations, in both cross-sectional and longitudinal contexts.

Exposure to diverse cultures can contribute to the mitigation of stereotypes, symbolic racism, and discriminatory decision-making of job-seeking immigrants (including African Americans, Ethiopians, homosexuals, and native Israelis) as well as among sample populations of Caucasian Americans or native Israelis (Tadmor et al., 2012). This phenomenon was observed irrespective of the specific stereotypes targeted or the sample populations' demographic characteristics. Gaining knowledge about minority religions and cultures has the potential to reduce ignorance and influence prejudicial attitudes and aversions. A study in Eastern Europe indicated that fostering mutual respect and embracing diversity within the Jewish community in Ukraine cultivated a harmonious learning environment that decreased intergroup prejudice and conflict (Kim & Chung, 2024).

Similarly, a study in Northern Ireland, which included Catholic and Protestant students from six European countries, discovered that various forms of intergroup contact significantly impacted explicit attitudes, implicit measures, forgiveness, and trust. Specifically, religious intergroup contact promotes positive attitudes towards outgroup members, with its effects enduring despite self-selection bias (Hewstone, 2009). This finding is substantiated by both experiential and social psychology, both theoretically and practically, across laboratory settings, neighborhoods, and broader society (Hewstone & Swart, 2011), persisting even after half a century (50 years at the time of his earlier study) of rigorous testing and observation.

Intergroup contact and educational programs to reduce prejudice have proven effective in virtual and remote contexts. Research has demonstrated that online interactions such as viewing social media profiles and engaging in collaborative gaming can enhance positive attitudes towards outgroups and diminish bias (Andrews et al., 2018; Imperato et al., 2021; Stiff & Kedra, 2020; White et al., 2014). Also, virtual intergroup contact has been shown to reduce prejudice, bolster collective action tendencies, and increase confidence

in intercultural communication capabilities (Schumann & Moore, 2022). This modality of contact fosters harmonious intergroup relations on a large scale, establishing it as a potent mechanism to promote understanding and cooperation among diverse groups.

Amzalag and Shapira's survey (2021) revealed that indirect online contact can enhance intergroup relationships within diverse communities. Participants exhibited increased mutual respect, favorable perceptions of online learning, and heightened tolerance for others. Furthermore, direct online intergroup engagement has been shown to augment outgroup familiarity and knowledge (White & Abu-Rayya, 2012), diminish intergroup anxiety and dehumanization (Abu-Rayya, 2017; White et al., 2019), and significantly reduce stigmatization (Boccanfuso et al., 2021). Investigations involving younger generations utilizing online virtual meetings, mobile chat applications, and gaming (e.g., Abu-Rayya, 2017; Helm & van der Velden, 2019; Imperato et al., 2021; White & Abu-Rayya, 2012) have substantiated the efficacy of online intergroup communication in dispelling negative attitudes. Overall, online communication platforms have the potential to enhance intergroup relationships, alleviate anxiety, and promote tolerance and acceptance while preserving cultural identities.

However, research on educational programs and intergroup contact has yielded mixed results. Recent studies have shown that multicultural education and intergroup contact are often ineffective. They indicate that problems such as shallowness, lack of meaningful interaction, cognitive dissonance, insufficient institutional support, and real-world challenges reduce their effectiveness, especially in historically divided societies. Some scholars contend that such encounters can inadvertently foster bias, particularly when individuals perceive them as coercive (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). Others have observed that contact does not consistently yield positive outcomes regarding attitudes towards outgroups, perceived similarities, or willingness to engage with outgroup members (Boehm et al., 2010; Tavakoli et al., 2010). Moreover, online technology is ineffective in promoting multicultural competence in primary schools (Cameron et al., 2017), resulting in virtual contact that fails to mitigate aversion.

For many, Allport's prerequisite for successful prejudice reduction through intergroup contact is often unmet. Beelmann and Lutterbach (2020) noted that promoting awareness without real understanding leads to shallow knowledge and weak cultural competence. Equally, Blaylock and Briggs (2023) stressed the importance of context, as conditions such as equal status and shared goals must be present for intergroup contact to be effective. Furthermore, Nasie (2023) posits that multicultural education frequently emphasizes theoretical knowledge over practical skills, limiting its applicability in real-world

contexts.

Multicultural education initiatives commonly encounter resistance from students, who often view them as unnecessary and ineffective (Whitehead & Wittig, 2004). This resistance has been attributed to students' denial of prejudice, normalization of bias, tendencies toward self-segregation, and the belief that diversity inherently prevents prejudice. A recent study by Choi (2024) posited that more than intergroup contact in isolation is required; such contact must be integrated with educational efforts. The most effective promotion of positive intergroup relationships occurs when contact is coupled with education on global citizenship.

Likewise, scholars anticipate that intergroup interactions can impede social progress by dissuading less powerful groups from initiating conflict, as individuals typically avoid confronting friends and acquaintances. Minorities who maintain positive relationships with dominant groups are less inclined to challenge societal norms or advocate for their rights (Reicher, 2007). Research indicates that intergroup interaction may produce unintended consequences, particularly concerning political engagement and the pursuit of justice and equality (e.g., Amir, 1969; Forbes, 1997). Consequently, further research is required to understand the effectiveness of these interactions and educational programs.

A substantial body of data supports the effectiveness of cross-group interactions and multicultural educational initiatives for reducing prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping. Multicultural education fosters interethnic relationships and enhances educational equity in the United States (Bigler, 1999; Zirkel, 2008), and interactions among diverse groups are essential for comprehensive communication (Al-Faruqi, 2012; Leterfield, 2024). However, prior research has primarily focused on minority groups outside the United States, including Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans, largely due to the civil rights movements of the 1960s (Banks, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2004). This trend is evident in intergroup contact research examining intergroup conflict concerning demographics, economic conditions, and political power distribution (King, 2009). As a relatively small minority, Arab Americans have historically been absent or misrepresented in multicultural curricula (Wingfield, 2006), indicating a bias in representation. Despite their status as U.S. citizens, Muslim Americans have been understudied in the literature (Calfano et al., 2019), underscoring the need for more comprehensive studies in this field.

September 11 marked a significant shift in the political visibility of Arab and Muslim Americans, leading to increased discrimination. A Pew survey (2017) identified discrimination, prejudice, racism, religious intolerance, Islamophobia, stereotypes, and the perception of Muslims as terrorists, along with the political rhetoric and policies of former President Trump regarding

Muslims, as primary concerns affecting Muslims in the United States today. This marginalized group has transitioned from a non-salient religious category to a salient and racialized outgroup, culminating in a rise in negative attitudes and behaviors directed towards Muslims, a phenomenon designated as "Islamophobia" (Allen, 2010; Helbling, 2012).

Multicultural education aims to enhance national cohesion rather than promote division. It does not marginalize disadvantaged communities nor conflict with Western norms (Banks, 2006, pp. 129–131). Intergroup interactions and discourse are essential for effective communication and well-being. The post-9/11 context highlights the need for multiculturalists to include Arab Americans and Muslims. This study investigates how multicultural education can mitigate prejudice, emphasizing the importance of interfaith dialogue and interactions in fostering positive sentiments, enhancing tolerance, and bridging cultural and racial divides between this minority group and others. The goal is to contribute to the limited research on the beneficial effects of intergroup interactions, interfaith discourse, and intercultural education in alleviating enmity, particularly regarding Arab and Muslim Americans.

The Role and Impact of Dialogue on Bias Reduction

Interfaith dialogues can mitigate aversion and prejudice toward Muslim and Arab communities, similar to their effects on other minority groups. Existing literature suggests that intergroup interactions effectively reduce bias (Harrington & Miller, 1992; Jackson, 1993; Pettigrew, 1969, 1997). Van Assche et al. (2023) illustrate that constructive intergroup interactions enhance tolerance and diminish conflict, even amidst perceived threats or discrimination. These interactions promote tolerance by engaging with specific subpopulations perceived as problematic. Leterfield (2024) and Al-Faruqi (2012) contend that effective communication necessitates dialogue. Interfaith discourse reduces negative conditioning and extremism while fostering listening, communication, and mutual respect (Al-Faruqi, 2012, pp. 60-66). The landscape of interreligious contact in the United States has evolved since the 1965 Immigration and Nationalities Act, facilitating a more multiethnic, multicultural, and multireligious society. Interfaith discussions cultivate respect, peaceful coexistence, and religious freedom (Shafiq & Abu-Nimer, 2011) and transform interpersonal relationships.

Arab/Muslim American National Advocacy and Civic Action Groups

Arab Americans have sought political engagement and solidarity in response to prejudice, anti-Muslim legislation, and economic adversity. The Center for Constitutional Rights (2014) indicates that such restrictions often infringe upon the rights of Muslims. They recognized the need to combat ignorance, stereotypes, and prejudice to reduce discrimination. Advocacy

organizations and mosque mobilization have been instrumental in combating intolerance, raising awareness, and promoting Islamic values of acceptance, tolerance, peace, and respect for diverse faiths. American Muslim organizations have played a pivotal role in advancing interfaith dialogue, civil rights, and conflict avoidance, underscoring their commitment to fostering peace and understanding . Interfaith dialogue and direct contact diminish prejudice and hostility while facilitating personal and systemic change (Neufeldt, 2011).

According to the Washington Post and the New York Times, faith cooperation improves social ties and cultural variety (Zhang, 2022). Interfaith organizations from Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist backgrounds meet regularly to discuss, share meals, and collaborate. This phenomenon has garnered significant attention in New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Coalitions, interfaith efforts, and community participation have advanced these initiatives. Imams and religious organizations mediate between political activists and politicians, viewing faith groups as crucial to community unity. They address public concerns and mobilize Muslim communities via mosque lectures and assemblies, highlighting the benefits of religious and political engagement (Jang et al., 2023). They also recognize the need for intellectual discourse to raise awareness and combat discrimination, as interreligious dialogue promotes respect for humanity and religious freedom, motivating Muslims to engage in initiatives led by the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the leading Muslim-American organization (Shafiq & Abu-Nimer, 2011; Hicks, 2013), believing modern interfaith dialogue programs, like those from the 1960s civil rights movement, promote social unity and respect for all religions to foster peaceful coexistence and address social and political challenges.

Common Grounds for Dialogue and Understanding

Age, education, money, and information shape people's religious and social views, whether in the U.S. or abroad. This is crucial to convince those who believe that Islamic ideals are incompatible with democracy and American values that they can benefit society. This underscores the need for effective communication between Muslims and non-Muslims to dispel myths.

Some Middle Eastern Muslims carried out the 9/11 attacks, but their actions did not represent Arab or Islamic ideals. President George W. Bush addressed this confusion at the Islamic Center in Washington one week after the attack, stating that Islam is a religion of peace, not terrorism. He said that terrorists symbolize evil and strife, not peace, while Islam comforts billions worldwide and unites disparate races through love (Bush, 2001). President Obama echoed this sentiment five years later, emphasizing the similarities between the three great faiths rather than their differences (Obama, 2015).

Instead of a clash of civilizations, miscommunication can be hazardous. The

Quran values human diversity, Jewish and Christian traditions, and pluralism to promote collaboration, respect, and understanding across societies (Asani, 2003; Sachedina, 2001). Although Muslims and non-Muslims politicize Quranic texts, Asani (2003) explains that Muslim history is more tolerant of other faiths. Islamic restrictions on adultery, drug use, and drinking aim to preserve individual and communal well-being, though these are often perceived as limitations. Alhashmi (2023) and others argue that Islamic equality, family unity, and sobriety foster societal cohesiveness, family relationships, and morality. Islam and the U.S. Constitution both value justice, equality, and individual rights (Khan, 2010; Quraishi, 2007; Yakub, 2005). Islam encourages social justice, human dignity, the preservation of life, and the rights of marginalized groups. The Constitution's checks and balances, separation of powers, and the Bill of Rights encapsulate these concepts.

Multicultural Education

Banks and Banks (1989) define multicultural education as a concept, reform movement, and process to restructure educational institutions to provide equal academic opportunities for students of different races, ethnicities, languages, cultures, and exceptional and female students (p.01). This effort promotes educational fairness for women, ethnic minorities, linguistic minorities, low-income individuals, and those with impairments (p.06), emphasizing the need to adapt education to a multicultural society. Similarly, Gay (2004) believed that educational diversity goes beyond curricular changes to include culturally responsive teaching practices that use students' backgrounds to enhance learning.

U.S. educational multiculturalism promotes fairness and inclusion by recognizing and appreciating students' cultural origins. Advocates view this as a form of resistance and empowerment for underprivileged populations. Koppelman (2011) states that "multicultural education engages in a critical examination of power and structural inequities and explores conflicts between and within groups" (p. 133). This approach changes the curriculum, pedagogy, and faculty-student-family relationships. Other researchers have also noted its impact on politics and civil rights. The National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) asserts that the values of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity underpin multicultural education. These values correlate with the Declaration of Independence, South African and American Constitutions, and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which support this view.

Critics of US multicultural education attack the whole principle of and thus its education. label multiculturalism as anti-Western and non-American, arguing that it harms social, political, and interpersonal connections. For example, Ravitch (1999) claims that multiculturalism threatens the core

values, beliefs, and traditions of Western civilization in U.S. education. Bernstein (1995) argues that it hinders integration and promotes division. Schmidt (1997) describes multiculturalism as a neo-Marxist philosophy based on cultural relativism that promotes variety, tolerance, and sensitivity but may challenge American values and institutions (p. 03). This study investigates these points from both perspectives.

However, Banks and Banks (1989) and Graham (2005) note that American school culture and curriculum primarily reflect mainstream Anglo-American culture, with little cultural and ethnic diversity. People come from various cultures, races, languages, and experiences. Therefore, multicultural education can help close the achievement gap, prevent children from falling behind, reinforce democratic values, create educational frameworks that reflect diverse societal inputs, and improve opportunities for all students, particularly given the increasing number of immigrants fleeing poverty, violence, and persecution (Gay, 2004), justifying the need for multicultural education that represents the population.

Arab and Muslim Americans in the US's National Curriculum

Post-9/11 events revealed gaps in American knowledge of Arab and Muslim populations, highlighting the need for enhanced awareness. Jarrar (1983) found that 1970s textbooks stereotyped Arabs as primitive, warlike, and hostile. Pre-2001 textbooks contain issues that can intensify misunderstanding, prompting Sewall (2008) to advise publishers to correct inaccuracies. After 9/11, David and Ayoub (2005) identified conflation and normalisation in instructional materials, misrepresenting Arab identity and Islam. These materials homogenize Arab American experiences, reinforcing stereotypes and marginalization. The authors recommend depicting Arab Americans more accurately. Today, Arab and Muslim Americans face racism, prejudice, and Islamophobia in multicultural societies. They feel alienated despite the assumption that a multicultural society includes all ethnic groups. These prejudices restrict diversity, as seen in the experiences of Muslim minorities before and after 9/11.

The US curriculum perpetuates negative Arab and Muslim stereotypes (Douglass, 2009; Haddad & Smith, 2009; Wingfield, 2006), with schools and the media portraying Islam and Muslims as threats to national security. Early education exposes children to these unfavorable views. Elementary students learn about Islam through community studies but encounter misrepresentations of the Qur'an and Islamic doctrines. Douglass (2009) argues that misconceptions persist in textbooks, which use negative terms like "strict," "extreme," and "terrorist" (pp. 88–90) to describe Islamic ideas. While secondary social studies include religious studies, Islam is often discussed only briefly. According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (2003), religious discrimination and Islamophobia have harmed the education

and public health of Muslim communities in both private and public schools.

Sahli et al. (2009, p. 232) noted that state and national requirements limit Islamic education to festivals and rituals, ignoring beliefs and everyday activities. This approach fails to combat Islamophobia, as many who fear Islam do not understand it. Many organizations try to influence textbook content, but Islam-related courses are especially problematic. Islamophobia-promoting beliefs and actions lead to bullying among Muslim students and those perceived as Muslim. Racism, religion, and sexual orientation have fueled school bullying in the United States (Wang et al., 2009). Discrimination against Muslim students violates academic freedom and ethics and harms their well-being. Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits religious discrimination in educational institutions based on race, color, religion, national origin, and sex, upholding the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection guarantees (US Department of Justice, 2019, p. 12). Despite these safeguards, religiously motivated bullying and harassment continue to affect students. Education is critical to combating religious extremism and prejudice (Crane, 2009), so American Islamic education must inform both Muslims and non-Muslims about Islam. An anti-Islamophobic curriculum should depict Muslims as diverse rather than solely as victims (Zaidi, 2019). Likewise, incorporating high-quality Arab and Arab/Muslim American literature into curricula challenges stereotypes enhances cultural awareness, and fosters appreciation of diversity and inclusivity.

Culturally Educating the 'Us' and the 'Them'

Since Banks (1994) advocated for a multicultural curriculum to assist minority groups in overcoming psychological confinement and enhancing social engagement, several interfaith and intergroup communication training programs have utilized culturally diverse resources to facilitate students' comprehension of others' objectives (Koppelman, 2011), thereby promoting democratic racial perspectives.

Intercultural education involves recognizing cultural traits and addressing past oppression (Gooding-Williams, 1998). To enhance intercultural understanding, it is imperative to incorporate the contributions of various ethnic groups in American history and culture. Informational hegemony arises from "civilizational distortions" that undermine Arab claims and suppress opposition; therefore, multicultural education should counteract stereotypes depicting Arabs as "primitive, backward, desert-dwelling, nomadic, war-loving, terroristic, and full of hate" (Jarrar, 1983, p. 388).

Authentic educational resources should emphasize that multicultural education about Arab and Muslim culture, history, and Islam aims to bridge the Arab/Western cultural divide and acknowledge the West's indebtedness to Arab and Muslim contributions to its progress. Due to ethnic stereotypes and

limited interethnic interactions, students must comprehend the contributions of diverse ethnic groups to American history and society (Gay, 1994). Americans should recognize that Arab and Muslim Americans have significantly contributed to the military, politics, activism, arts, and sports, earning distinctions such as Nobel Peace Prize nominations and Emmy honors (Kasem, 2015). Furthermore, Muslim Americans have profoundly influenced American society, particularly in the civil rights movement and arts. Activists like Malcolm X, a key figure in the Nation of Islam, emphasized racial justice and empowerment, significantly impacting broader civil rights initiatives throughout the 20th century (Flodin-Ali, 2023).

Muslim Americans have significantly contributed to American society throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Contemporary Muslim American comedians like Preacher Moss, Mohammed Amer, and Azhar Usman use humor to address misconceptions and promote understanding, often exploring shared experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment to foster resilience and pluralism. Notable figures include Dr Mehmet Oz, who has made substantial medical contributions and hosts a health program, and Fareed Zakaria, host of CNN's Fareed Zakaria GPS, editor-at-large for Time Magazine, and columnist for The Washington Post (Schleifer & Aftab, 2013). Multicultural education examines the historical and contemporary backgrounds, languages, cultural traits, contributions, and the social, political, and economic conditions of various ethnic groups.

Outcomes of Group Contacts, Multiculturalism, and Multicultural Education

The US multicultural social history examines the influences of diverse groups in the United States, including Africans, Latinos, Native Americans, Irish, Poles, Slavs, Italians, Germans, Asians, Jews, and English populations (Singer, 2014, p. 153). The multicultural experience of Arab Americans is unique but can be contextualized alongside other demographic groups. Multiculturalism is crucial for Arab Americans, helping them navigate cultural landscapes, engage with diverse individuals, gain insights, and enhance their well-being by fostering belonging, respect, and supportive networks (Husain, 2017; Modood & Ahmad, 2007). Additionally, multicultural education that addresses Islamophobia through contemporary events may enhance students' understanding of political discourse, similar to the interfaith and cross-cultural dialogues promoted by various religious organizations (Zaidi, 2019). This approach mitigates intergroup prejudice and conflict globally through authentic educational resources and the cultivation of critical thinking skills, empowering students to analyze societal issues from multiple perspectives and confront biases (Banks, 1994; Parekh, 2002).

Method

This study investigates successful education and intergroup contact cases

designed to mitigate prejudice, drawing from diverse samples worldwide, focusing on multicultural societies where Arabs and Muslims are integral components of the social fabric. The quantitative data collected encompasses cases of other minorities categorized as outgroups based on religion, nationality, and economic status. The groups examined include American college students, immigrants primarily from Arab, Chinese, and Mexican backgrounds, as well as the dynamics between Hindus and Muslims, British Muslims and White Britons, and interactions among Muslim students, non-Muslim students, and teachers. The cases analyzed concentrate on studies that underscore positive interactions among group samples in face-to-face contexts such as schools, universities, and workplaces. The aim is to examine how both direct and indirect communication, along with educational programs, influence emerging issues related to tensions, particularly xenophobia, Islamophobia, discrimination, and prejudice within societies. While the data predominantly emphasize Arabs and Muslims in the United States, it also includes information from other countries such as India, the United Kingdom, Indonesia, Pakistan, Czechia, and Australia.

Results and Discussions

Recent National and Global Studies (Tables. 1, 2, and 3) indicate that education and communication enhance interethnic interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims in multicultural environments. The following are some examples.

Table. 1. Selected Studies about the Impact of Intergroup Contacts and Education in the US

Study	Year	Sample Area	Target Groups	Key Findings
Nelson et al. (1994)	1994	Shippensburg University, USA	Students from diverse ethnicities /Muslims & non-Muslims	Building Bridges Program enhanced intercultural communication and empathy; potential for campus-wide improvement.
Engberg (2004)	2017	USA	University students including Muslims & non-Muslims	Multicultural education programs (MEPs) reduced anti-Muslim bias; students in MEPs showed fewer Islamophobic attitudes.
Asfari (2017)	2004	USA	Higher education students including Muslims & non-Muslims	Multicultural interventions reduced racial prejudice; highlighted need for further research on educational strategies.
Lillegard-Bouton (2021)	2021	IOA University, USA	US college students & Arabs, Chinese, and Mexican immigrants	Participants in Multicultural Education program expressed more sympathy feelings towards Arabs, Chinese, and Mexicans

By the Authors

The United States

Nelson et al. (1994) performed the first US research on Shippensburg University’s Building Bridges Program, which aimed to improve intercultural communication and empathy among different students via talks mediated by

professional student leaders. The program, led by two varied faculty members, included 450 students and 13 facilitators in 25 talks. **Table 1** suggests that program extensions promote campus cross-cultural discourse and understanding. Quasi-experimental research by Asfari (2017) examined how multicultural education programs (MEPs) reduced anti-Muslim prejudice in higher education almost two decades after the 9/11 attacks. **Table 1.** shows that MEPs reduced Islamophobia in participants somewhat but significantly compared to the control group. The results show that MEPs may promote social transformation, steer integration, and promote policy development. Engberg (2004) studied how multicultural courses, diversity workshops, peer interventions, and service projects affect racial bias in higher education. Multicultural interventions in curriculum work, according to several studies. Engberg suggested ways to improve intervention studies, create student transformation theory, and identify research gaps. Numerous positive outcomes suggest that these programs may decrease racial prejudice, stressing the need for further studies (**Table 1**). Similarly, Lillegard-Bouton (2021) found that Northern Iowa University students who participated in Multicultural Education had more positive views of Arabs, Chinese, and Mexicans, especially those with more exposure to Multicultural Education (**Table 1**). This proves that these programs work regardless of intensity. **Table 2.** Selected Studies about the Impact of Intergroup Contacts and Education in Asia

Study	Year	Sample Area	Target Groups	Key Findings
Maiti et al. (2022)	2022	India	Hindu and Muslim participants	Intergroup contact during vocational training significantly reduced prejudice between Hindus and Muslims, highlighting a successful multicultural education approach in conflict settings.
Rohmat et al. (2023)	2023	Indonesia	Students Muslims & non-Muslims	Multicultural education promotes harmonious togetherness through integrated curriculum, democratic values, humanism, pluralism, and social action programs, reducing prejudice and ensuring equality.
Naz et al. (2023)	2023	Lahore, Pakistan	Teachers and students Muslims & non-Muslims	Multicultural education improves critical thinking, brainstorming, problem-solving, understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, and fosters camaraderie and inclusion in varied classrooms.

By the Authors

Asia

Maiti et al. (2022) studied positive and productive contact in India, a varied cosmopolitan country, to examine religious prejudice reduction in Asia. As shown in **Table 2**, intergroup interaction in a vocational training program substantially reduced prejudice between Hindus and Muslims for at least one week after the program ended. According to this study, multicultural education helps to resolve conflicts. Rohmat et al. (2023) noted that multicultural

education promotes coexistence in Indonesia, a multicultural and multiethnic nation, via an integrated curriculum, democratic values, humanism, pluralism, and social action. This strategy fosters tolerance, unity, collaboration, and national pride to minimize prejudice, promote equality, and improve education (**Table 2**). Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, hosted a third research project. Despite implementation obstacles, Naz et al. (2023) found several advantages of intercultural education. This method increases critical thinking, brainstorming, and problem-solving in education while teaching instructors and students to appreciate other cultures, beliefs, and languages. **Table 2**. shows how intercultural education promotes inclusion, reassesses prejudices, and improves interpersonal connections under various circumstances.

Table 3. Selected Studies about the Impact of Intergroup Contacts and Education in Europe and Australia

Study	Year	Sample Area	Target Groups	Key Findings
Abu-Rayya & Brown, (2021)	2021	UK	British Muslims & White Britons	Limited direct interaction with Muslims leads to reliance on negative stereotypes. Intergroup contact enhances social perceptions through subgrouping, positive stereotype formation, decreased perceived threat and anxiety, and (re-)humanization.
Gómez (2023)	2023	Czechia	General population including Muslims & non-Muslims	Indirect contact among the two groups reduced prejudice, enhanced feelings of inclusion and improved multicultural understanding particularly among Young Muslims
Nurdin et al. (2024)	2024	Australia	General population, including Muslim communities	Transition from "White Australia" policy to inclusive multicultural policies has fostered social cohesion, reduced political and religious violence, and supported the integration of Muslim communities, despite persistent Islamophobia.

By the Authors

Europe and Australia

Abu-Rayya and Brown (2021) created a vicarious contact strategy in the UK that dramatically decreased anxiety and negative emotions among Muslims and Anglo-Britons. According to this survey, British Whites and Muslims are becoming more Islamophobic. Indirect contact between the two groups reduced prejudice, fostered inclusion, and promoted reciprocal conduct, particularly among Muslim teens, while boosting intercultural knowledge (**Table 3**). Gómez (2023) found that Czechs had the most unfavorable views about Muslims in the EU since 2014. Lack of direct interaction and unfavorable public perceptions are to blame. There are few empirical qualitative studies on Czech anti-Muslim stereotypes and intergroup interactions. According to this study, intergroup interaction enhances Muslim social views via subgrouping, positive stereotypes, reduced perceived dangers and anxiety, and dehumanization. **Table 3**. shows that Czechs regard Muslims as immigrants and often as Arabs, Middle Easterners, or non-Whites. Misunderstanding and poor communication have caused Muslim prejudice.

Nuridin et al. (2024) noticed a significant shift in Australia from the 1960s “White Australia” strategy to a multicultural framework. Because of societal cohesiveness and less inter-community strife, political and religious violence has decreased. Since 2010, the government has increased multicultural measures to combat racism and promote accessibility and fairness, especially for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The state and local policies support diversity. Multiculturalism helps Muslim communities in Australia maintain their culture while contributing both socially and economically. Multicultural education promotes inclusion, as these measures have been shown despite Islamophobia.

Discussion and Interpretation

Stereotypes and perceived threats intensify Islamophobia in Indonesia, India, Australia, and Western countries. Previous studies (**Tables 1, 2, and 3**) show that “pleasant and cooperative contact” (Hewstone & Brown, 1986, pp. 1–44) enhances communication and fosters harmony among minority groups. Arab and Muslim Americans have contributed to the diversity of the United States (U.S. The Commission on Civil Rights (2014) and understanding Arab history and culture can reduce this prejudice. This objective depends on distributing and acquiring knowledge about history and contributions. To minimize adverse cultural effects, educators should use reliable resources to teach Arab and Muslim individuals their achievements (**Table 1**). The findings support prior research in the United States (e.g., Camicia, 2007; Zaidi, 2019; Pettigrew et al., 2011), demonstrating that intergroup discourse and education are practical in various cultural contexts, including the U.S. Educational institutions can mitigate Islamophobia and improve comprehension of diverse perspectives within Muslim and Arab communities.

However, the data suggest that not all intergroup interactions and educational initiatives effectively diminish this prejudice. Further research has yielded inconsistent or ambiguous findings. Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) argued that intergroup interactions can promote bias when individuals face intimidation or coercion. Intergroup interaction can produce unexpected results, especially regarding political participation and the quest for justice and equality; however, some studies (Amir, 1969; Forbes, 1997) still need to be more conclusive. Intergroup connections reduce bias but may dissuade marginalized groups from pursuing conflicts essential for social progress, as friends and acquaintances typically avoid confrontation (Reicher, 2007). The author posits that minorities who maintain positive relationships with dominant groups exhibit a reduced motivation to advocate their rights or societal status. Numerous studies, including Pettigrew et al.’s (2011) meta-analysis of 515 papers involving 250,000 participants and Camicia’s (2007) research, demonstrate that intergroup interaction and education reduce prejudice towards Muslims, mainly Arabs. The U.S. initiative “Facing History

and Ourselves” provides education on bias and empathy in historical contexts. Beelmann and Lutterbach (2020) demonstrated that inclusive education policies reduce prejudice and discrimination by promoting cross-cultural understanding and conflict resolution, promoting cultural diversity awareness, enhancing empathy and tolerance, and aiming to eliminate prejudice.

Bias Reduction Challenges and Solutions

Gay (1994) emphasized that education must be personally relevant, socially suitable, culturally accurate, and pedagogically effective in addressing biases. Religious establishments, including mosques and advocacy groups, play a critical role in integrating immigrants into American society and should advocate for curriculum reform and promote interfaith dialogue. Some scholars (e.g., Kenan, 2015; Zaidi, 2017; Wai-Yip, 2008) emphasize the role of religious institutions in preserving ethnic identities, countering stereotypes, opposing Islamophobia, and fostering tolerance.

The mitigation of bias in multicultural societies requires integrating multicultural knowledge, values, and intergroup interactions (Gay, 1988; Wingfield, 2006). Understanding Arab American history and culture is essential for addressing prejudice and promoting social justice. Social justice education must address racial, economic, social, and political inequality issues. Culturally relevant education enhances academic performance and cultural identity (Gay, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2022). Effective intercultural education requires well-prepared educators and a curriculum that inclusively represents the diverse cultures of all students (Smith, 2009). Loewen (2007) asserts that biased textbooks and educational materials lead to instructors disseminating historical inaccuracies.

Haddad and Smith (2009) identified that instructors’ biases contribute to negative stereotypes about Islam, affecting the representation of Arabs, Muslims, Islam, and the Middle East. Additionally, Instructor biases can impede positive perceptions of Arabs, Muslims, Islam, and the Middle East (Haddad & Smith, 2009). Thus, many educators overlook Arab culture and history or rely on stereotypes despite the increasing presence of Arab American students (Suleiman, 1996). Therefore, teacher training is essential for effective multicultural education. Improving the educational experiences of Muslim students requires addressing discrimination and Islamophobia, updating curricula to incorporate Muslim cultural elements, hiring qualified educators, enhancing financial support for minority groups, and establishing suitable resources. Equitable treatment of all students requires well-prepared educators and supportive policies (el-Aswad, 2021). Transformative practices are essential for recognizing diversity, deconstructing racist systems, and empowering marginalized groups. These practices include direct experiences, such as student exchanges and integrated classrooms, and indirect exposure

through media or literature.

Short-term multicultural education diversifies content and methodologies to accommodate diverse students and improve outcomes. Systematic transformation of curricula to incorporate Arab Americans enhances understanding of cultural pluralism and promotes equitable opportunities among various ethnic and cultural groups. Enhancing interreligious engagement may mitigate anti-Muslim attitudes. Islamic educational curricula in the US and Canada address bias through comprehensive programs, Muslim educational institutions, and community engagement. Educational systems aim to mitigate bigotry and intolerance by promoting curiosity and respect, distinguishing between religious education and education about religion. Aligning with recent scholars' recommendations about these issues (e.g., Camicia, 2007; Parekh, 2002; Putnam & Campbell, 2012; Zaidi, 2017), this study recommends addressing bias and hate crimes targeting Muslims in Western nations through curriculum integration, community engagement, and interfaith initiatives to help change intolerant societal attitudes.

Conclusions

Despite the US constitutional creed and democracy, not everyone enjoys equal treatment. Immigration may increase racial hostility towards people seeking freedom and opportunities outside their own country. Arab immigrants and Americans endure racial bias in different social and economic institutions and schools due to the media, historical misconceptions, and misrepresentation of Arabs, Muslims, Islam, and their culture in American textbooks.

This study found that culturally appropriate counselling and Islamic education may reduce discrimination and help Muslim Americans and immigrants integrate. Multicultural discourse and education have helped Arab and Muslim Americans comprehend and challenge myths. Multicultural teaching in schools promotes cultural identification and reduces ethnic lives. Understanding cultural identity and cross-cultural interaction reduces intergroup prejudice and conflict, mitigates differences, and promotes peace.

National unity, empathy, and civic engagement all require intercultural education. Cultural integration and tolerance may help 21st-century minorities, such as Arab and Muslim Americans. Constructive and collaborative intergroup interactions may reduce religious, ethnic, and racial biases from outgroup contact. Both approaches may help individuals navigate diverse and pluralistic communities and promote reciprocal learning and interaction with people of various origins, opinions, and ideologies. However, these treatments require further testing to prove their usefulness and durability.

¹ In the US, the term 'White Majority' refers to the demographic group that constitutes the largest segment of the population. As of the 2020 census, individuals identifying as White alone, non-Hispanic, comprised 57.8% of the total population. This group is often characterized as the 'dominant group' due to its historical predominance in the nation's social, political, and economic spheres. See Craig, M. A., Rucker, J. M., & Richeson, J. A. (2018). *Racial and Political Dynamics of an Approaching "Majority-Minority" United States*. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 677(1), 204–214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218766269>, and Abascal, M. (2020). *Contraction as a Response to Group Threat: Demographic Decline and Whites' Classification of People Who Are Ambiguously White*. *American Sociological Review*, 85(2), 298–322. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122420905127>

² Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" theorizes that post-Cold War conflicts will originate from cultural and religious differences rather than ideological or economic factors, with global disputes arising at the intersections of major civilizations—Western, Islamic, and Confucian—due to their incompatible values and worldviews, contradicting the anticipated global acceptance of Western liberal democracy. See Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks. Assuming binaries of "savagery" versus "civilization," "modernity" versus "medievalness," "backwardness" or "prehistoric," the discourse of the "clash of civilizations."

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