

YOUTH 2 YOUTH:  
CHANGING PALESTINIAN-AMERICAN IMAGES AND STEREOTYPES  
THROUGH ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

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A Thesis presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by  
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DECEMBER 2008

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YOUTH 2 YOUTH:  
CHANGING PALESTINIAN-AMERICAN IMAGES AND STEREOTYPES  
THROUGH ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

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My beloved mother, Fibi, and sister Lily... I dedicate this thesis to both of you for being such an inspiration for me. Your strength and will to overcome every obstacle in life has given me faith in the power of achievement and persistence. Your love, support, appreciation and faith in me were the food that kept my soul going. I also dedicate this thesis to all my friends; here in Missouri and back in Palestine... you have been the support system I was gifted with when I most needed it. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my girlfriend, Anastasia, who was always there for me, equipping me with the courage and enthusiasm to excel and become better in everything.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted for all my thesis committee members for their help and support during the past two semesters. I would like to thank Dr. Fritz Cropp for his relentless encouragement, for his belief in the importance of my academic work and research endeavors, and for his never-ending comforting words. I would like to also thank Dr. Glenn Leshner for granting me with the methodological and statistical understanding, for providing help when I needed it, and for making me value quantitative research. I would like to thank Dr. Margaret Duffy for her insights that widened my horizons and Dr. Alfred Drury for helping me understand more about the field of International Relations, as well as for his help with developing certain parts of the study questionnaires.

I would like to also express my gratitude for Ms. Hania Bitar, Ms. Eman Sharabati, and the staff of the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership And Rights Activation (PYALARA) for their help with recruiting the Palestinian participants for this study. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Kevin Wise, Dr. Glenn Leshner, Dr. Charles Davis, and Mr. Hans Meyer for their help with recruiting American participants for the study.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the young Palestinians and Americans who took part in the study. Without your participation, this study would not have seen the light. It was you, your comments, and responsiveness to my study that made regain belief that change does happen, even if it is one person at a time.

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the past few years, the perceived images and stereotypes of Palestinians and Americans have worsened as a result of a variety of political dynamics and policies related to both the United States and the Middle East. Mass media, corresponding to these changes, adopted certain frames, which has contributed to the cultivation of these images and stereotypes. As the world is witnessing a technological revolution in the field of communication, that is reshaping our communities, sociopolitical and economic process, this study aimed at investigating the influence of online social networking on the way American and Palestinian youth perceived each other. Furthermore, the study also investigated the influence of online social networking on young people's level of interaction, psychosocial well-being and social capital, within the framework of controlled online social networking among youth from two different national groups.

The study utilized an online field experiment design to examine how online social networking can influence images, stereotypes, level of interaction, psychosocial well-being and social capital of Palestinian and American youth. The results indicated that as a result of the online interaction, participants' perceived images and stereotypes were positively influenced, as well as positive relationships were developed amongst them. In

addition, online social networking also positively influenced the participants' psychosocial well-being and social capital. The results were discussed within the framework of the role online social networking and the Internet can play in bridging the gap between cultures and mobilizing grassroots efforts in people-to-people public diplomacy. Future research is highly needed in this area, through which slightly altered methodologies can be used to further the knowledge about online social networking in an international perspective.

*Keywords:* Palestinian, American, youth, online social networking, image, stereotype, level of interaction, psychosocial well-being, social capital, and public diplomacy.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The day after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the world changed; it looked different, and people started perceiving each other through different lenses. That atrocious incident has become hallmark of a new era in international politics, which can be generally described through overlooking the growing gap between different ideologies, values, and political endeavors; between the modernized West, and the underdeveloped East; between Christianity and Islam; and between the U.S. and the Middle East. Media have played a major role in acknowledging, and maybe widening, these gaps.

As the tragedy took place, media attention has shifted towards the coverage of this macro event and its implications. Terrorism, probably for the first time, struck the United States on its soil during the 9/11 attacks. This led to a confused role of the media; whether they should adopt the salient policy issues and frames, or present a balanced mode of coverage – and/or become a mouthpiece for terrorists (Gregerson, 2003; O’Heffernan, 2007).

As Palestinians and Arabs are negatively portrayed by news media, Hollywood movies and fiction literature, the ingrained image in the minds of average Americans is thought to be heavily stereotypical (Sabbagh, 1990; Shaheen, 2003; Said, 1978; Said 2001). Such an image did not progress after 9/11, but rather went from bad to worse. On the other hand, the image of Americans has severely declined in the Arab world, due to the invasion of Iraq and the continuous support of the state of Israel (Nye, 2004).

As the media enhance such images and stereotypes, new platforms of communication pose potential for change. The Internet has been growing at an unstoppable pace, with a huge number of users worldwide (Internet World Stats, 2007a). The new advances in technology, Norris (2001) explains, are inducing change in the way people communicate, participate in the society and politics, and even reformulate democracy. Online social networking is thought to impact individuals through the creation of virtual communities with strong ties and high levels of trust amongst its members (Wellman, 1996; Wellman, 1997).

This study was set to explore how online social networking can influence perceived images and stereotypes of Palestinians and Americans. As the Internet has vastly grown in usage and penetration over the past few decades, it is thought that it influences individuals on the political (Norris, 2001), social (Wellman, 1999), and personal levels (Ellison et al., 2007). The effects of the Internet, as a medium of communication, have been studied throughout the scope of interaction (building relationships, trust, support, intimacy, companionship, closeness and multiplexity), psychosocial wellbeing (self-esteem and satisfaction with life), social capital (bridging, bonding and maintained social capital), and the improvement of negative images and stereotypes (Ellison, 2007; Izumi & Hammonds, 2007; Petróczy et al., 2007). Through an online field experiment, the researcher investigated whether interacting virtually, via a closed *Facebook* group, can positively influence the way Palestinian and American youth think about and perceive each other, in addition to having an effect on their level of interaction, psychosocial well-being, and social capital.

The results showed a positive influence of the online interaction through Facebook on the images and stereotypes perceived by American and Palestinian youth. It was also illustrated that participants were able to develop positive relationships and show signs of companionship and closeness towards their counterparts from the opposite national group throughout their interaction via the closed Facebook group. The results also suggest that online social networking positively influenced the participants' psychosocial well-being and social capital. Finally, the results indicate that the participants perceived social capital more positively when it was measured on an offline basis, meaning with regards to their actual communities, when compared with online social capital, which was related to the emergence of a virtual community from the Facebook group.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The study aims at understanding how online social networking through a closed Facebook group, can influence Palestinian and American youth perceptions, images and stereotypes of each other. In addition, the effects on their level of interaction, psychosocial well-being, and social capital were examined within the framework of online social networking. The study builds upon previous literature, as this literature review is split into four major sections. The first section focuses on images and stereotypes of Palestinians and Americans, and explores the different elements that have contributed to the emergence of such stereotypical images, such as the influence of mass media, the political dynamics between the United States and the Middle East, among others. The second part of the literature review focuses on the Internet and online social networking. The third section focuses on social capital and psychosocial well-being, while exploring how online social networking can influence them. The fourth section is dedicated to Facebook; its historical background, uses influence on the youth generation. In the fifth section of the literature review, the researcher, based on the reviewed theories and concepts, outlines the research agenda and identifies the research hypotheses.

### Images and Stereotypes

Hilton and Hippel (1996) study the concept of ‘stereotype’. Building on various definitions, they define stereotypes as “beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of a certain group” (p. 239). They further explain that stereotypes

are not only *beliefs*, but also, *theories* that describe the way of and the reason for the emergence of such perceptions. As many scholars argued that stereotypes are hard to change, Monteith et al. (1998) disagree by arguing that due to the fact that they are “easily activated and applied in the context of social judgment and behavior” (p. 63), change could be observed through suppression of these stereotypes. As the process of suppressing stereotypes might influence their elimination, negative aspects of suppression might hinder the process of change, itself.

Generally speaking, stereotypes reflect both cognitive and motivational processes, as they serve to simplify the process of understanding the ‘other’ by the person/group holding the stereotype, which makes the process easier through relying on “previously stored knowledge” (Hilton & Hippel, 1996, p. 238). Furthermore, the authors argue that stereotypes emerge “in response to environmental factors, such as different social roles, group conflicts, and differences in power, [...] as a way of justifying the status quo, [...] and in response to a need for social identity” (Hilton & Hippel, 1996: p. 238). The formation of stereotypes, the authors explain, is caused by various reasons, one of which is generalization. Let’s take group X for example, where members of that group observe a certain behavior of a single member or a few members from group Y. Stereotyping means that members from group X generalize that behavior to all members of group Y. Other reasons include: *making individual judgments, erroneous or “illusory” detection, and the lack of acceptance to the attributes of out-group members* (pp. 244-248).

#### *Stereotyping Palestinians!*

In 1978, Edward Said presented his revolutionary work of *Orientalism*, which is the “manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by

imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient” (p. 202). His new conceptualization became a benchmark for the study of cross-cultural stereotyping of the Islamic East, which analyzed how literature, the news media, and Hollywood movies negatively portrayed people from the *Orient*, but further explained that *Orientalists* studied the *Orient* in a somewhat imperialist and narrow vision (Said, 1978). For example, Shaheen (2003) analyzed 900 Hollywood movies to find out that the image of Arabs is consistently negative:

When colleagues ask whether today’s reel Arabs are more stereotypical than yesteryear’s, I can’t say the celluloid Arab has changed. That is the problem. He is what he has always been – the cultural “other.” Seen through Hollywood’s distorted lenses, Arabs look different and threatening. [...] What is an Arab? In countless films, Hollywood alleges the answer: Arabs are brutal murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women. [...] Pause and visualize the reel Arab. What do you see? Black beard, headdress, dark sunglasses. In the background – a limousine, harem maidens, oil wells, camels. Or perhaps he is brandishing an automatic weapon, crazy hate in his eyes and Allah on his lips. Can you see him? (Shaheen, 2003: p. 172).

Sabbagh (1990) agrees with Shaheen that many of the negative images in portraying Arabs are still persistent in various types of media: “a camel jockey, a terrorist, or a filthy rich sheikh [...] or a sex maniac” (p. 6). Yet, she argues that due to the influence of the civil rights movement in the United States of America, and the growing attention and sensitivity given to ethnic stereotyping, some of these stereotypes

are identified on a larger scale. She goes further by explaining how the biases of news media contribute to these negative images, where journalists – restricted by time pressures – employ stereotypical images in their coverage.

With regards to Palestinians, their images are not different from how Arabs and Muslims are portrayed. Their images are vastly distorted and dehumanized. Whether in films or in the news media, they are portrayed as terrorists, uncivilized, non-existent prior to the formation of the state of Israel, and have the constant motive of destroying Israel (Sabbagh, 1990; Shaheen, 2003). Furthermore, Sabbagh (1990) explains that throughout a number of popular fiction novels, the image of Palestinians is frequently described as “dirty, vindictive, deceptive, and given to all kinds of sexual excesses and violence” (p. 8). Edward Said agrees in his *Al-Ahram Weekly’s* article (published the week of 9/11), and adds that most Americans recognize the right of Palestinians to have their own independent state, yet the images of Palestinians,

...seem to be that they are uncompromising, aggressive, and “alien,” that is, not like “us.” Even when asked about the stone-throwing young people, whom we believe are Davids fighting against Goliath, most Americans see aggression rather than heroism. Americans still blame the Palestinians for obstructing the peace process, Camp David most particularly. Suicide bombing is viewed as “inhuman” and is condemned universally. (Said, 2001)

#### *Media: Image, Frame, or Stereotype-Maker?*

What is evident from previous research is that the image of Palestinians is not only limited to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but also, is part of the overall negative

images and stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims. Throughout the past century, development of mass media research has given scholars tools to analyze how media affect and influence public opinion. Contemporary media effects studies utilize theories of *agenda setting* and *framing* to understand the role media have in image formulation, influence on public opinion and attitudes, and even the effect of media on individual political (electoral) decisions. Within the perspective of this study, the conceptualization of agenda setting and framing are important to answer the question ‘why’ the present images of Muslims, Arabs and Palestinians have emerged as a result of mass media coverage. Conversely, such an understanding is vital to explore the role Arab media have in formulating the images and perceptions of Americans.

Throughout the past four decades, mass communication research took a turn towards studying media effects empirically. McCombs and Shaw (1972) have postulated that the role of media in politics is characterized by their influence on individual attention to certain issues, as it is widely known as the *agenda-setting* role of mass media. This effect is understood through analyzing the relationships between media, policy-makers, and public opinion (Brosius & Weinman, 1996). Cohen (1963) postulated that “the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” (p. 120). However, some scholars have argued that due to political changes, media, sometimes, do *tell people what to think* (Wanta, 2004). As media are influenced by power and money (Herman & Chomsky, 1988), as well the journalists’ reliance on public officials for their sources, standards of objectivity in reporting are hindered (Herring & Robinson, 2003, p. 558). Other scholars claim that the lack of objectivity in reporting news – especially foreign

affairs – is due to the fact that journalists tend to frame the news through selectivity, which later results in the ‘social construction of reality’ (Entman, 2007; Nelson et al., 1997; Scheufele, 1999).

Scheufele (1999) explicates that media frame issues through selection and salience, creating a *fait accompli* situation for members of the public opinion, where the issues and how they are reported become reflection of the social norm. Gamson et al. (1992), in their explication of *image*, argue that media construct reality and “meaning in ways that go beyond media imagery” (p. 373), and that people start to have shared and fragmented frames, where the meaning becomes generalizable and stereotypical.

#### *‘Clash of Civilization?’*

Samuel P. Huntington in 1993 published the ‘Clash of Civilizations?’ article, through which he hypothesized that the world would go into a conflict between civilizations (Huntington, 1993). Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, U.S. media have adopted the *clash of civilizations* paradigm in an attempt to analyze and cover the attacks and the growing terrorism threat (Abrahamian, 2003). Norris et al. (2003) describe what has happened in the media as a *cultural shift*, which was not only evident in covering U.S. related events, but further, in interpreting various events related to violence worldwide. As such, the ten largest newspapers in the United States adopted the ‘war on terrorism’ frame through utilizing President Bush’s view of the world as ‘polar opposites’ (Ryan, 2004).

Media framing of Palestinians is related to the political and economic dynamics of foreign policy of Middle Eastern countries and the United States. For example, between 1984 and 1998, more negative frames were adopted before the endorsement of the Oslo

Peace Process<sup>1</sup> and during the first *Intifada*<sup>2</sup>. After the ‘realization of peace’, the frames shifted towards more positive portrayals (Noakes & Wilkins, 2003). American media have long avoided explaining the fact that Palestinians are still under occupation (Ackerman, 2001). Ross (2003) analyzed *The New York Times*’ framing of Palestinians over thirteen months after September 11, 2001 to find that the frames bounced back to even more severe negativity. Acts of ‘violence’ or ‘resistance’ were associated with global terrorism, as the frames avoided describing Palestinians throughout the *justice* frame, which was more associated with Israel. Palestinian children were associated with violence, and the image of ‘stone-throwing and angry youth’ when comparing the coverage of five major international media and UNICEF stories during *Al Aqsa Intifada* (Aqtash, et al., 2004). The findings of these studies suggest that as Israel’s humanity was glorified in the media coverage, Palestinians were dehumanized.

### *Decline of America’s Image*

Associations and attitudes to the image of a country is related to a variety of factors. Simon Anholt (2005) developed what he calls the ‘Nation Brand Index (NBI),’

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<sup>1</sup> Officially called the *Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements* or *Declaration of Principles (DOP)*. After publicly acknowledging Israel’s right to exist in 1988, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) engaged in the first ever face-to-face negotiations with the State of Israel. The ‘arrangements’ lead to two agreements. The first, Oslo I agreement (also known as: Gaza-Jericho Autonomy Agreement, was signed on May 4, 1994, where Israel redeployed its troops from the Gaza Strip and the city of Jericho, and the Palestinian established a self-rule government in these areas. Almost a year and a half later in September 1995, a second agreement was signed between the Palestinians and Israelis in Washington, D.C., which held an interim status with the formation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a self-rule government over parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This second agreement “[o]utlines the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of Palestinian autonomy, extending it to other parts of the West Bank,” which was divided into three types of areas, varying in the extent to Palestinian and Israeli control. These agreements were interim in their nature, especially that five major issues were left to permanent final status negotiation; Jerusalem, settlements, borders, water and security. The Oslo agreement crashed into failure in September 2000, when Israeli PM, Ariel Sharon instigated Palestinian riots by visiting one of Islam’s holiest place, Al Aqsa Mosque, which lead to the second *Al Aqsa Intifada*. (PASSIA, 2007)

<sup>2</sup> Refers to the Palestinian national movement against the Israeli occupation during 1987-1993, it is the “Arabic word for the Palestinian uprising, literally meaning the “rising up and shaking off.” (JMCC, 1989).

which relies on characterizing a nation's image and brand association through the analysis of a hexagon that includes tourism, exports, governance, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, and people. Anholt found that the United States is ranked fourth after Italy, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Joseph S. Nye (2004), one of the world's preeminent international relations theorists, argues that the image of the United States has declined drastically after the invasion of Afghanistan, but most importantly after the invasion of Iraq. Nye claims the reason behind this decline is the failure of the United States to practice true soft power, while focusing its foreign policy on the practice of hard power. He explains that through the practice of soft power, you are forcing the other side to do what you want them to do without coercing them, but rather through persuasion and attraction. As the U.S. State Department started to invest more in *public diplomacy* efforts, what has been marketed to 'win the hearts and minds' of the world, especially the Middle East, was not capitalized on through foreign policies (Freedman, 2006). Nye (2004) points out that feelings of anti-Americanization and anti-modernization have grown in a number of countries, especially after 9/11, yet he explains that the negative association is limited to the administration rather than the whole population, American technological advances, and democratic values. Various studies were conducted within this retrospect, concluding that the image of the U.S. is damaged and negatively perceived by foreign publics, and calling for a reassessment and evaluation of America's public diplomacy and strategic communication to foreign audiences (Freedman, 2006; Gilboa, 2005; Goodall, et al., 2006; Hoffman, 2002; Romarheim, 2005).

Since the United States has become a symbol for modernism and democracy, Nye (2004) argues, images reflecting those realities are reflected in other countries, not only through attraction to and integration of these values of sociopolitical life, but further was extended culturally through imitating the loyalty and consumption of American brands, trends and fashion, such as Coca-Cola and McDonald's. Zakaria (2001) agrees by stating that the Arabs, previously, perceived America as a model for bright modernity. However, due to the growing anti-Americanism, these images have been replaced negative associations. Gause (2005) shows different polls of Arab and Muslim countries that show unfavorability of American policies, despite the acceptance of values and principles of democracy. Tessler (2003) explains that the "pattern that consistently emerges [in surveys] is a strong dislike for American foreign policy but much more nuanced, and often quite positive, attitudes toward American society and culture and toward the American people" (p. 179) with higher acceptance levels amongst young men and women. Similar is the opinion of Walt (2001), as he adds that a major reason of the growing criticism of the United States' policy in the Middle East is its continuous support to Israel.

The Pew Global Attitudes Project signified that over the course of six years between 2000 and 2006, there has been a tremendous decline in the global favorability of the United States. However, in the past year or so, the favorability has slightly increased. The report indicates that "[a]fter Iraq, many Muslim countries began to see the U.S. as a threat to Islam." The results also show general stereotypes about Americans, such as greediness, immorality and low levels of religiousness. As for supporting Israel, the majority of Arabs polled thought that "American policy is too supportive of Israel at the

expense of Palestine”, where in Kuwait, a pro-American Gulf state, 77% of the people said the U.S. “favors Israel too much.” The report concludes that America’s image in the Arab and Muslim worlds witnessed a decline throughout the recent ‘war on terrorism’ (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2007).

In 2004, the Arab American Institute commissioned Zogby International to conduct a survey about the way Arabs perceive Americans. The survey results show that in terms of American values, participants from six Arab nations evaluated them positively. However, negativity stemmed when the issues of the War in Iraq and policy towards Palestine were brought up (Arab American Institute and Zogbi International, Inc., 2004)

Nye (2004) explains that the way foreign publics perceive a country and its people is highly important in foreign policy formulation. He suggests that public diplomacy practiced through strategic communication with foreign individuals, and not only to officials through diplomatic channels, is vastly important in our information age. Nisbet et al. (2004) explain how television news is amongst the main influencers of the declining image of Americans in the Arab world, or so to speak, anti-Americanism.

### Internet and Social Networking

As most of the research regarding the images and perception of Arabs and Americans has been focused on ‘traditional’ mass media coverage (television, newspapers, radio, movies and literature), few studies have tackled the influence of new electronic media (i.e. Internet) on such images and perceptions. Needless to say, Internet has become a major part of people’s lives around the world. Several scholars have

explicated its inescapable influence on society, politics and the lives of individuals (Norris, 2001). Furthermore, the Internet is not limited to a one-way flow of information, but rather, has become a platform for virtual social networking and two-way exchange of information (Wellman, 1996; Wellman, 1997; Wellman, 1999).

*'The Digital Divide'*

If anything could be generalized about our globalized world today, it would be that it is easily and immensely connected and wired. The Internet, as an idea, was thought of first in 1962, when an MIT scientist wrote a memo discussing 'a galactic network' to connect computers internally. After that, the RAND Corporation proposed the idea and the Pentagon adopted it in 1969. The birth of the World Wide Web was in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN in Geneva, who has revolutionized the information world by creating what is called *hypertext*. By 1991, there were twenty countries in North America and Western Europe who were connected to this new World Wide Web through "hyper-text language for global information sharing." Two years later, the National Center for Supercomputing Applications launched *Mosaic*, which is thought to be the "first graphical Web browser." This browser was, then, "made available for UNIX systems, then for Microsoft Windows and the Apple Macintosh." Furthermore, "[t]he remarkable rise of the Internet as a new mass medium came in October 1994 when Netscape Communications released the Netscape Navigator browser, built on Mosaic technology and distributed free" (Norris, 2001, p.27; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 412-413)

Today, a little less than 20% of the world population uses the Internet, as reported by the Internet World Stats (2007a). This means that as of September 20, 2007, there are more than 1.2 billion Internet users around the world, with a 244.7% increase from the

Table 1.

*Internet Usage and Population Statistics*

World Region	Pop. (2007 Est.)	Pop. % of World	Internet Usage	% Population Penetration	Usage % of World	Usage Growth 2000-2007
Africa	933,448,292	14.2%	43,995,700	4.7%	3.5%	874.6%
Asia	3,712,527,624	56.5%	459,476,825	12.4%	36.9%	302.0%
Europe	809,624,686	12.3%	337,878,613	41.7%	27.2%	221.5%
Middle East	193,452,727	2.9%	33,510,500	17.3%	2.7%	920.2%
North America	334,538,018	5.1%	234,788,684	170.2%	18.9%	117.2%
Latin America	556,606,627	8.5%	115,759,709	20.8%	9.3%	540.7%
Australia/ Oceania	34,468,443	0.5%	19,039,390	55.2%	1.5%	149.9%
World Total	6,574,666,417	100.0%		18.9%	100.0%	244.7%

*Note.* Online report by *Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics*, released on September 30, 2007.

year 2000. The highest increase in Internet usage is seen in the Middle East region with a 920.2% increase, while Africa and Latin America/Caribbean come in second and third places, with 874.6% and 540.7% increase, respectively, over the past seven years. However, the percentage of users in these fast-growing Internet markets is all below 8% (combined) of the total users in the world. North America remains at the top of the list in Internet penetration, with 69%, while the Middle East comprises 10% of the penetration rate. Despite the fact that it ranks fifth in regards to Internet penetration, the Asian continent has the highest number of users (437 million), North America, on the other hand, ranks third, with 233 million users, and the Middle East is found to have 20 million users (Please see Table 1).

In the Middle East, the report states, the highest growth, between 2000 and 2007, was overseen in Syria (3,566.7%). Iran, Yemen and Saudi Arabia, come in the following ranks, with 2,940.0%, 1,370.0%, and 1,170.0% of growth, respectively. With regards to Palestine (Palestinian Territory, Occupied), the report estimated a total of 243 thousand users (around 8% penetration), which has yielded in around 600% growth between 2000 and 2007 (Internet World Stats, 2007b). Another descriptive report by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics indicates that as of 2006, around 16% of the total population use the Internet (PCBS, 2007). Khoury-Machool (2007) anticipates that 25% of young Palestinians use the Internet, which is an increase compared to the yesteryear. The reason, he explains, is that Internet has become available in many of the schools and universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A recent report of the *Stanford Institute for the Quantitative Study of Society*, shows that more than one-third of Americans (sample respondents) use the internet daily, with an average of 213 minutes per day. Internet users utilize one third of their usage time to work, whereas they use it more during the week (79%) than on weekends (21%). It was noted by the report that “an hour on the Internet reduces face-to-face time with family by close to 24 minutes,” and reduced sleep time by 12 minutes. Furthermore, it is evident that youth use the Internet more, when compared to other age groups, where they spend more time on messaging and in chat rooms, compared to older people who spend most of the time on email and work-related matters (Stanford Center for the Quantitative Study of Society, 2005; p. 3).

By looking at these numbers, it is most certain that the Internet has become a major part of people’s lives, even in countries facing poverty, hunger, disease, and

conflict. The growth of Internet is remarkably huge, which may constitute the reason behind the increased academic interest in media and communications-oriented studies of the Internet. Furthermore, Wimmer and Dominick (2006) explain that the cheap cost of conducting Internet research, and its growing use among people are reasons behind this growth in Internet media research.

Norris (2001) outlines what is referred to as *the digital divide* between *Internet optimists* and *Internet pessimists*. Optimists foresee a vast influence of the new technology on society and democracy, whereas the pessimists believe that the gaps among people, in terms of socioeconomic circumstances, are significant in impeding the growth of the Internet as an essential part of sociopolitical life and processes. The author explicates that the new cyberculture will influence both the participation of individuals in the society, and the way they are mobilized. The Internet, explains Norris, has become a new platform where like-minded people can mobilize each other, express themselves, and take up sociopolitical participation roles.

[I]n the longer term, the impact of the Internet culture may be expected to shape the values and attitudes of the youngest generation of users, including children who are growing up surrounded by this technology in their homes and schools, contributing to the process of value change in postindustrial societies (Norris, 2001, p. 197)

Norris (2001) adds that it is hard to understand the influence of the Internet – being a new technology – on civic engagement and sociopolitical participation, as people are still grasping the effects of traditional media within this regard. However, she explains the Internet has a high potential for creating a ‘virtual political system,’ where

mobilizing people becomes easier and less expensive; the motivation for participation increases due to high confidence; and specified interest, information reception and sharing are practiced.

### *Online Social Networking*

Similar to the work of Norris is the growing body of research about the influence of the Internet on individuals and the social networking behaviors. Wellman (1997) defines a social network as “a set of people (or organizations or other social entities) connected by a set of socially-meaningful relationships, and when analyzed, we are able to describe “underlying patterns of social structure, [explain] the impact of such social structures on other variables, and [account] for change in social structures” (p. 179). Prell (2003) borrows Wasserman and Faust’s common networking terminology, which explains that a network is formed of: *actors, ties, relations, group, and social network*.

Online social networking can be identified as a derivative of earlier research that conceptualized Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). Rice (1994) explains “CMC systems bring together compatibilities of both computers and telecommunication networks to facilitate the creating, structuring, processing, storing, retrieving, and exchanging of (perhaps multimedia) content among multiple users” (p. 168). As the author identifies various typologies of researching and analyzing CMC systems (*extent of sampling, measure of usage, measure of network flow, and content*), the analysis of the content of such platforms, combined with identification of network flows is thought to “provide a context for meaning and is affected by the content exchanged within that structure” (P. 175).

In order to contextualize the content of online social networks, one has to understand the difference between strong and weak ties. Granovetter (1983) explains that in socializing with other people, individuals develop two kinds of relationships: those that are governed by strong ties, and others that are related to weak ties. Weak ties, as the author explains, are superficial and shallow relationships with one's acquaintances, while the strong ties are those that emerge among friends and family. Granovetter explains: "social systems lacking weak ties will be fragmented and incoherent" (p. 202). Such a realization is understood in the importance of interaction amongst these strong and weak ties, as the society breathes on the way weak ties create a bridge with strong ties leading to the formation of networks within the society.

Wellman (1996) explains social networks behold strong ties amongst their participants or members, and the strong ties are enhanced in the presence of a 'diversity set of weak ties.' This diversity of weak ties, the author explains, can transform immediately into strong, when individuals have shared interests, rather than shared social characteristics. In a study that analyzed the relationships amongst members of MOO (Multi-User Dimensions, Object Oriented virtual environments), Parks and Roberts (1998) found that the users have developed personal friendships through online interaction, especially with the opposite sex, which was somewhat contradictory to the norm of off-line relationships.

## Social Capital and Psychosocial Well-Being

### *Social Capital*

In 1995, Robert D. Putnam theorized that America's social capital is on a declining scale in a series of scholarly and media entries under the title "Bowling Alone." Putnam (1995) defines social capital as the "feature of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p. 66). Five years later, Putnam put together a book dedicated to understanding the different aspects of social capital and its influence on civic engagement, democracy and the sociopolitical process. In the book, Putnam (2000) rounds the definition of social capital:

Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. (Putnam, 2000, p. 19)

Quan-Haase and Wellman (2004) identify social capital as "a useful conceptual tool to examine the vitality of neighborhood, city, or country," which allows scholars and officials "to evaluate a number of core dimensions, such as public and private community, and civic engagement" (p. 113). The influence of the technological advances is seen along a continuum between those who perceive them as a destructive element to social capital, and those who interpret the change in technology as a change in the platform for social capital as well. Those who say that industrialization diminishes social capital claim that the reason for that is due to the way the society has become after the industrial revolution, where social connections have deteriorated due to the urbanized and bureaucratic nature of life. However, the other school of thought perceives the change as a source of advancement to social capital, especially that the community is defined "not

in terms of locality but as social networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability, support, information, a sense of belonging, and social identity “(p. 115). They perceive these advances as a blend into the rhythm and routine of individual lives, which create another form of participation and civic engagement.

Putnam (2000) explains the influence of social capital on civic engagement and political participation, is based on the concept of ‘social reciprocity.’ The author states “[t]he touchstone of social capital is the principle of generalized reciprocity,” which is based on a different form of a social give and take relationship, where citizens do good, not because they are expecting to be repaid for it, but rather because they have developed a level of confidence that “down the road you [another person] or someone else will return the favor”” (p. 134).

Wellman et al. (2001) conducted a massive survey (over 39 thousand respondents) to measure the influence of Internet on social capital. The survey, conducted in 1998, revealed that the Internet has become part of people’s routine in terms of their socialization behavior. It has emerged as a place where people can communicate and maintain their relationships with their friends and families. They, further, found an influence on heavy users in their participation and involvement in volunteer activities and organizations. The study was also suggested that the Internet has become a supplement to social capital, in the sense that it provides space for social interaction, not only with ‘strong ties’, but further with new people.

Lin (1999) maps the magnificent growth of technology over the span of a few years, as he tries to identify the influence of what is called ‘cybernetworks’. Cybernetworks are “social networks in cyberspace”. Lin explains that as a result of the

revolutionary development in technology, “a revolutionary rise of social capital” will take place. He explains that the global effect of cybernetworks is the realization of ‘bottom-up globalization process’, though social capital evolves away from any restrictions or “dominance of any class of actors” (p. 45).

As various researchers pair the effect of social networks to social capital, Lin (1999) defines social capital as “*investment in social relations with expected returns,*” where the four elements of *information, influence, social credentials, and reinforcement* clear the distinction between social capital and personal, economic or human capital (pp. 35-37). Moreover, Lin suggests: “social capital can be defined as *resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions*” (p. 35). Garton et al. (1997) analyze social networks through the study of relations, which “are characterized by content, direction, and strength”; ties, which is the connection between two actors by at least one relation; the multiplexity of these ties, form which we can understand the levels of relations as “intimate, voluntary, supportive and durable”; and composition, through which we are able to understand how *social attributes* of the people involved influence the relations or the ties.

Putnam (2000) distinguishes between *bridging* and *bonding* social capital, whereas bonding social capital refers to the form of social capital that is “by choice or necessity, inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups.” On the other hand, bridging social capital contribute to generating “broader identities and reciprocity,” in contradiction to the benefit of bonding social capital which “bolsters our narrower selves” (p. 22-23). Ellison et al. (2007) borrow Putnam’s distinction between bridging and bonding social capital. The researchers’ interpretation is

understood within the framework that bridging social capital refers to the interaction on the level of weak ties, whereas the bonding is concerned with stronger ties and interaction. Banking upon this understanding, Ellison et al. (2007) have conceptualized what they call ‘maintained social capital,’ which basically concerns the sustainability of relationships created within social networks. The researchers measure maintained social capital by investigating how relationships initiated online could be maintained in the ‘real’ or ‘non-virtual’ world.

### *Psychosocial Well-Being*

In the past few decades, there was extensive research carried out on psychosocial well-being, where it was conceptualized by combining the two major facets of well-being; satisfaction with life and self-esteem. Diener et al. (1985) define satisfaction with life as “a cognitive, judgmental process,” aimed at understanding how people self-evaluate their own lives and the quality of their lives (p.71). The researchers have developed a 5-item scale, also known as the *Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)*, where respondents were required to self-report about how close their life is to their ideal, the conditions of their life, their overall satisfaction with life, their achievement, and the change they would make to their own lives.

The other predictor of psychosocial well-being is *self-esteem*. Morris Rosenberg was pioneering in conceptualizing what he called *global self-esteem*, which was the basis for the *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale*, a scale that is widely used in social science studies. Rosenberg (1965) conceptualized self-esteem through a continuum that combines descriptions of both low and high self-esteem. The result is a 10-item scale that requires

respondent to self-report their self-satisfaction, reflections on self-worth, among others (Rosenberg, 1965, Rosenberg et al., 1995).

Several studies have focused on the psychosocial well-being of youngsters. As for Palestinian youth, Barber (2001) studied the impact of the first *Intifada* of 1987, and the results illustrate a significant association between what the author calls the “Intifada experience” and youth antisocial behavior and depression, whereas depression was observed higher amongst young females. Qouta et al. (1995) studied the impact of the peace process on young Palestinians living in Gaza, to find out that the traumatic experiences they have had before the peace treaty was signed, still influenced their psychosocial well being, by showing low self-esteem and high neuroticism.

Morgan and Cotton (2003) studied the impact of internet usage on mid-Atlantic youth to find out that the higher the usage of emails, chatting and instant messages, the lower youth had depressive symptoms. Rohall and Cotton (2002) linked Internet usage with self-esteem, showing that the more youth use the Internet for non-communicative purpose, such as surfing, the lower their self-esteem.

“It’s in your (Face)book”

*‘Blogging’ Around the Block*

Online social networking has taken different forms, since the inception of the Internet as a medium of communication between individuals. Social network sites have taken the format of personalized and spontaneous communication among online users, thereby redefining “the dynamics between space and place” (Lin et al., 2007: p. 15). Avram (2006) defines three categories of *Social Software*: weblogs, wikis, and social

Table 2.

*Definition of Social Software Categories, Avram (2006)*

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Category	Definition
Weblog	"[w]eb application enabling periodic posts on a common webpage with public access". These posts are "usually short" and are organized in a chronological order. (p. 2)
Wiki	"[w]ebsite (or other hypertext document collection) that allows users to add content, as on an Internet forum, but also allows anyone to edit the content. "Wiki" also refers to the collaborative software used to create such a website" (p. 3)
Social Networking Site (SNSs)	"[u]sed to describe the means of networking in virtual communities. [...] In these communities, an initial set of founders sends out messages inviting members of their own personal networks to join the site. New members repeat the process, growing the total number of members and links in the network." They also "offer features such as automatic address book updates, viewable profile, the ability to form new links through "introduction services," and other forms of online social connections" (p. 3)

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networking sites. The author explicates that *Social Software* is distinctive from other forms of online interaction and communication, as such emails and other alike forms are classified as top-down communication tools, whereas *Social Software* is a bottom-up approach, in the sense that it "enabl[es] people to organize themselves into a network based on their preferences" (p. 1). Avram (2006) gives us the definitions for each of these categories (Please see Table 2.).

Social networking sites have grown vastly popular in the last few years, while each is catering for a specific scope of interest that gathers its users under its umbrella, especially that they "allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with other" (Ellison et al., 2007). To name a few, Friendster.com has over 15 million users and is known for its affiliation to dating (Boyd

& Heer, 2006), LiveJournal.com is more broadly focused on granting the opportunity for its 11 million users to express their personal diary-like posts in 32 languages (Herring, 2007), and Facebook.com, which is considered the world's largest social network with more than 70 million active users (Facebook, 2008).

### *The Facebook Story*

Imagine this, three undergraduate students – Marck Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes, in a Harvard dorm room in February 2004, launching a social networking site, and this sites would end up, three years later, the most popular student-visited site, and the somewhere around the sixth most trafficked site in the world, and the second among “social media sites in the world.” This is a simplified version of the story of Facebook, whose founders define it as “a social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family and coworkers,” with a rather new dimension to social networking that capitalizes on privacy, since users “control the information they share and with whom they choose to share it” (Facebook, 2008).

After its launching in February 2004 as a social networking site for Harvard students, Facebook started attracting other students in major American universities, such as Stanford, Columbia and Yale. Ten months later, in December, Facebook marked its millionth user. During that time, a primitive version of what is Facebook today existed, with features limited to the “Wall” and the “Groups” application. During the second quarters of 2005, the company raised \$12.7 million “in venture capital from Accel Partners”, and grew to include over 800 college networks in the United States. As of the

fourth quarter of 2005, Facebook became open to high school students, and added the “Photos” application, and by the end of the year, there were over 5.5 million active users. The growth path continued in 2006, the company raised \$27.5 million and added more interactive features. However, the greatest turn of events in 2006 was in September, when Facebook was open to the general public with any type of email address, as it was limited previously users with an American university/high school email address. As a result, the number of active users reached 12 million, which reached 20 million, later in April 2007. Furthermore, in 2007, over 3000 applications were added, ranging between games, quizzes and music sharing (Facebook, 2008) (Please see Table 3)

Table 3.

*Facebook Features*

<b>Basic</b>	
My Profile	A personal page, through which users post their personal information. These information can be viewed by a user's friends and network members.
Friends	The page where a user's friend-list is found. This page also enables users to browse and search for other friends.
Networks	Pages that gather people who belong to the same geographical region, university, high school, or work. "Being a member of a network grants users permission to view most of the profiles in that network and join most of the groups."
Inbox	An email-like page, where private messages are exchanged between users.
<b>Applications</b>	
Photos	Grants the users to upload their photos and organize them into albums (60 photos per each album). Photos can be rotated to the right angle, friends present in the photos can be tagged, and captions may be added.
Notes	A personal blog feature, where the users can post their personal writings, and share them with their friends
Groups	Pages created by users that suggest common interest among the members of each group. A user's profile contains a list of the groups he/she are members in, and through membership, the user has the ability to view all the content that is posted onto these pages. Creating groups has many preferences related to the privacy and membership of the group.
Events	An application where people can organize events virtually, or announce off-line events through inviting their friends.
<b>Features</b>	
Wall	A feature of the user's profile that enables friends "to post comments or insights about them." Users have control over these Wall posts, in the sense that they can delete the ones they don't like
New Feed	A newly introduced featured that displays the activities of a user's friends through a short amount of time.
Mini-Feed	A personal profile specific feature, that enables friends to see what the user has been doing, and what activities he/she has been having on Facebook
Other	Other applications include: <i>Posted Items, Video, Marketplace, and Gifts</i> . In addition to these basic applications, a plethora of new application have been added, which require the acceptance of the user to add them.  Other features include: the <i>Share</i> button, and <i>Mobile</i> features.

*Note.* Facebook Product Overview provided by the Facebook Press Room, [www.facebook.com/press/product.php](http://www.facebook.com/press/product.php)

As mentioned previously, Facebook, currently, has over 80 million active users. Since January 2007, two hundred thousand people are registering daily, with an average weekly growth of 3%. Regarding the users of Facebook, they come from fifty-five thousand "regional, work-related, collegiate, and high school networks," whereby, over 50% are not college students, especially that the fastest growing demographic of user are

25 year-olds and above. Facebook ranks sixth in the United States with regards to website traffic, with 54 billion page views per month, over 50% daily returns, and an average of 20 minutes spent daily by users. Furthermore, the site is considered the top picture-sharing platform, with 14 million photos uploaded daily. After the expansion in September 2006, the United Kingdom became the network with most users outside the United States (8 million users), while Canada ranked third in terms of the number of users (7 million users), followed by Turkey, Australia, France, Sweden, Norway, Colombia, and South Africa (Facebook, 2008).

Facebook CEO Mike Zuckerberg, in a TIME magazine interview, explains that the notion behind Facebook is to maintain communication and interaction with friends and acquaintances through what he stresses is a *social utility*, and not a social network. He, further explains, that the reason behind naming Facebook a utility is due to its distinction from the common goal-oriented use of social networks. The 23-year-old CEO tells TIME that due to Facebook's international expansion, the company is thinking of translating the site into other languages (Locke, July 17, 2007).

Lin et al. (2007) explicate that the advances in technology, or the *digital revolution*, has "redefined the dynamics between space and place", through which they are physically located in one place, yet their "identity, social capital, and flows of communication often exist in spatial form" (p. 15). Wellman and Gulia (1999) explain that the internet is not the only place where interaction between individuals occurs, which is why the participants "bring to their on-line interactions such baggage as their gender, stage in the life-cycle, cultural milieu, socioeconomic status, and off-line connections with others" (p. 3) Ellison et al. (2007) explicate that *social network sites*, such as

*facebook*, “allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others.”

There are few empirical studies of the influence of Facebook on its users. Much of the research deals with issues of privacy and more descriptive analysis of Facebook, rather than studying its impact and influence. Lampe et al. (2006) surveyed over seven thousand students at the Michigan University, to find out that the students’ use of Facebook is not to meet new people, but rather to maintain relationships that have taken place off-line; such as, old friends, classmates, people they meet in the bar, and others, where 93% of the sample responded that they have friends from their high school, only 10% have self-reported that they have friends whom they have never met, nor are they in the school or college. Although Facebook has been genuinely distinct for personal control over privacy, Acquisti and Gross (2006) explain that the majority of youth survey respondents did not know the Facebook company uses the information from their profiles for market research and other uses. Despite these privacy concerns, the authors have concluded that the respondents expressed unwillingness to stop using the site.

After exploring the historical background of Facebook, and the academic depth of its influence on its users, it is important to outline the agenda of this research, through linking the various concepts together.

### Research Agenda

#### *Influencing Images and Perceptions?*

The question raised at this stage is how would online social networks – being places where people connect with each other and where they express their identities and individual characteristics – influence perceived images and stereotypes? Izumi and

Hammonds (2007) explore this particular topic. They infer that although several sociological researchers concluded that stereotypes are hard to change, yet “a variety of factors can make stereotypes controllable. To suppress stereotypes, people need to be motivated to do so and have the necessary attentional resources and energy,” as they review the work of Olson and Zanna (1993) (p. 846). In studying ethnic stereotypes and how social networks influence them, Izumi and Hammonds (2007) conclude that individual stereotypes are changed by providing information about the person, while stereotypes about certain groups can be changed through disseminating information about the group itself, rather than limiting it to the individual.

As the researcher attempts to study how perceived stereotypes and negative images of Palestinians and Americans could be changed and positively influenced, the conceptualization of social networks builds the basis of this analysis. Khoury-Machool (2007) explains that the rise of Internet amongst Palestinian youth is transforming the means and tools of resistance against occupation, as youngsters are utilizing the Internet as a peaceful political tool for resistance. As the internet provides a platform for relationships amongst distant people, such relationships can influence the social capital of youth. Smith (1999) notifies us about the importance of investing in the social capital of youth, since “early extensive connections to others, close familial relationships, religious participation, and participation in extracurricular activities in one’s youth are significant predictors of greater political and civic involvement in young adulthood” (p. 553). Hence, this research is set to explore the influence online social networks have on young people from both sides, in relation to the effect this interaction will have on their opinions and attitudes towards each other. Such opinions and attitudes, as explained earlier, have been

greatly influenced by biased media coverage, and misinterpretation of the reality. This research does not attempt to redefine reality or explore the whole truth, but rather the shifts in perception of what reality is; questioning the opinions, perceived images and stereotypes each group has of the other.

As the literature of the effect of social networking on social capital is highly devoted to analyzing the process of networking itself, through analysis of the actors, ties, relations, and the levels of interaction, these aspects will not be the central focus of the study. The study will dedicate part of the analysis for the process, yet, the dominant part will revolve around the result(s) of such a process. The process sure makes us understand the dynamics of interaction, yet these dynamics will be studied through the framework of the change in opinions and attitudes that takes place among the participants.

#### *Research Hypotheses*

Deriving from what has been said, this study dealt with how perceived images could be altered and positively influenced, therefore, eliminating, or partially eliminating, the stereotypes that Palestinians and Americans have of each other. Furthermore, the study analyzed how groups of Palestinian and American youth could influence each others' opinions and attitudes through online social networking. The researcher hypothesized that throughout person-to-person interaction via a virtual online community (Facebook), young people are able to discuss various issues related to the images, perceptions, and stereotypes they have about the 'other'. As a result of this interaction, the opinions and attitudes of individuals in each group were expected to have been positively influenced, within the scope of social networking influence on youth's social capital.

The researcher assumed that participants from both national groups (Palestinian and American) had presumed images, perceptions and stereotypes of each other. The researcher hypothesized that as a result of online social networking through a closed and constrained Facebook group, Palestinian and American participants would experience a positive shift in the perceptions and attitudes they have of the other participants who belong to the other national group. Following are the hypothesis the researcher will test throughout this study:

*H 1: Online social networking would positively influence the level of interaction among participants cross-culturally/cross-nationally.*

H 1.1: Online social networking would help participants develop positive relationships with other participants in the Facebook group.

H 1.2: Online social network would help participants build trust with some members of the Facebook group.

H 1.3: Online social networking would help participants grant and/or receive support from other participants in the Facebook group.

H 1.4: Online social networking would help participants develop intimate relationships with other members from the Facebook group.

H 1.5: Online social networking would help participants develop companionship and close relationships with other member from the Facebook group.

H 1.6: Online social networking would help participants develop multiplex interaction with some members from the Facebook group.

*H 2: Online social networking would positively influence the psychosocial well-being of participants from both national groups.*

H 2.1: Online social networking would positively influence the self-esteem of participants.

H 2.2: Online social networking would positively influence the participants' satisfaction with life.

*H 3: Online social networking would positively influence the participants' social capital*

H 3.1: Online social networking would positively influence the participants' bridging social capital.

H 3.2: Online social networking would positively influence the participants' bonding social capital.

H 3.3: Online social networking would positively influence the participants' maintained social capital.

*H 4: Online social networking would have a positive influence on the perceived images and stereotypes participants have of members of the other national group.*

*H 5: Participants' nationality would have an influence on the way they interact through online social networking.*

H 5.1: Nationality would have an influence on the level of interaction among participants.

H 5.2: Nationality would have an influence on the psychosocial well being of participants, when compared between the time before and after the online interaction.

H 5.3: Nationality would have an influence on the social capital of participants.

*H 6: Participants' nationality would have an influence on the change in perceptions and image they have of each other.*

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study utilized an online field experiment where Palestinian and American youth (N=136) interacted throughout a closed Facebook group for the period of one month. The 2 (nationality: Palestinian vs. American) x 2 (Experimental treatment (research group) : Experiment “Facebook” group vs. Control “no Facebook” group) x 2 (Time: pre interaction vs. post interaction) mixed factorial (pre-post-control) design entailed two groups of participants, each including both Palestinian and American participants who were exposed to the pretest and posttest. Nationality and experimental treatment grouping were regarded as between-subjects variables, while time was dealt with as a within-subjects variable.

The researcher recruited a convenience sample of Palestinian and American youth (N=136) for the study. Palestinian participants (N=60) were recruited through cooperation with the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership And Rights Activation – PYALARA. American participants (N=76) were recruited from a large Midwestern university, where journalism professors encouraged their students to take part in the study as part of the research participation course requirements. Upon recruiting participants, they were divided into two groups; the experiment group (N=81; Palestinians=36; Americans=45); and the control group (N=55; Palestinians=24; Americans=31). The control group did not receive the experimental treatment of interacting through the Facebook group. The researcher decided to include a control group in the experimental

design, due to the frequently changing political situation in the Middle East and the United States, which might inflict some influences on the participants. Hence, it was important to have a ‘neutral’ group that was exposed to the experimental treatment, in order to understand whether the changes that happened to the ‘experimental group’ were due to the experimental treatment. During the one-month period of the experimental treatment, political or socioeconomic changes were expected to influence the results of the experiment. Therefore, the control group was tested before and after the treatment (online interaction) in order to grant the researcher a clear vision of whether these political and/or socioeconomic changes would have an influence over the participants’ responses in the posttest.

Table 4.

*2 x 2 x 2 Mixed Factorial design*

<b>Experimental treatment</b> (between-subjects)		<b>Experiment Group</b> (Facebook)		<b>Control Group</b> (No Facebook)		
<b>Nationality</b> (between-subjects)		Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	
<b>Time<sup>a</sup></b> (within-subjects)	<b>Pre</b> Interaction	36	45	24	31	N=136
	<b>Post</b> Interaction	30	43	20	27	N=120

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Time was a within-subjects factor, where the same participants took part the Pre- and Post-Interaction testing. The reason for having different numbers is due to experimental mortality, where participants withdrew their participation from the study

Due to the relatively long period of the study, the researcher faced *experimental mortality*, which Wimmer and Dominick (2006) define as the “[p]ossibility that subjects will drop out for one reason or another.” The authors explain that experimental mortality “is sure to have an effect on the results of a study because most research methods and statistical analyses make assumptions about the number of subjects used.” They suggest that the common experimental mortality rate can reach up to 50% of the subjects. During the course of this study, experimental mortality was around 11.8%, which was calculated from the number of subjects who took the pretest and those who took the posttest. (Please see Figure 1). The researcher decided not to include the participants who withdrew from the study in the data analysis, and therefore the number of participants dropped down to 120 (70 Americans and 50 Palestinians).

As the experimental treatment – Facebook group interaction – provided documentation for the discussions that took place amongst the participants throughout their interaction via the Facebook group, the researcher conducted qualitative content analysis to generate in-depth examples and anecdotes that will reflect the results of the experiment.

Over the past few decades, experimental research has been a major method to study media effects. The increase in its popularity is thought to be a result of “the rise in the cognitive approach to mass communication, a perspective that derives from the field of psychology, where experiments are the main source of data gathering” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 231). Williams and Monge 2001 define the experimental method as a “research plan undertaken to test relationships among variables based on systematic observation of variables that are manipulated by the researchers” (p. 15). Experimental

research design is the “*sine qua non* of the research world,” as it enables researchers to identify and test “whether something actually causes a change in something else” (Stacks, 2002, p. 196).

Wimmer and Dominick (2006) explain that experiments are useful as they grant the research and opportunity to gather *evidence of causality*, with a relatively low cost, and high potential for replication. However, the authors argue that experiments are *artificial*, since they are held in a controlled environment, with partial to complete exclusion of any noise and confounding variables. Furthermore, they explain that research experiments are endangered by two main risks: the bias of the researcher (experimenter), and the inability to generalize the results of the experiments to the general population, as they are limited to the group of participants (subjects) that are involved in the study.

This study was considered an online field experiment, since the setting of the experiment took place in a virtual ‘real life’ environment. Throughout the time period of the online interaction, the participants’ daily lives were not controlled, they “function[ed] primarily in their everyday social roles with little investigator interference or environmental restructuring” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 245). Field experiments, state Wimmer & Dominick (2006), are beneficial in “studying complex social processes and situations.” On the other hand, the authors explain that the disadvantages of field experiments include the fact that they behold a low level of control on any external influences that could hinder the process of the experiment, as some of these influences might be unexpected and surprising.

Since the experiment procedure resulted in a documented set of interactions amongst the participants, valuable content emerged throughout the Facebook group. This rich contextual content was interpreted through qualitative content analysis to understand how it “generates meaning and affects people, and what it reflects about society and culture” (Berger, 1995, p. 32). Arthur A. Berger (1995) sees the qualitative content (textual) analysis as a way of analyzing the *beliefs and values* of people. Silverman (2005) explains that qualitatively analyzing texts would help researchers to understand how people categorize issues and ideas, and would grant them a specific depiction of reality, without consideration to the correctness of the text.

The researcher looked for anecdotes and quotations that reflected the change in perceived images and stereotypes. Through analyzing the text that yielded from the online interaction, the researcher was able to trace and identify the means of attitudinal and behavioral change within the groups of participants. The text provided rich context, through which the quantitative data were understood in real life terms.

#### Independent Variables

This study investigated the influence of three independent variables, each with two levels of measurement: the nationality of the participants (Palestinians vs. Americans), the experimental treatment grouping (experiment group vs. control group), and time of testing (pre-experiment vs. post-experiment).

##### *Nationality*

The researcher recruited participants (N=136) from both nationalities: Palestinian (N=60) and American (N=76). Palestinians were recruited with the help of the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership And Rights Activation (PYALARA). PYALARA is a

nongovernmental youth and media-oriented organization operating in all Palestinian cities, with the involvement of huge numbers of Palestinian youth (PYALARA, 2007). One of PYALARA's staff, who helped with gathering the name and contact information of participants, was instructed to try and select participants that represent gender and geographical diversity.

With regards to American students, they were recruited from a large mid-Western University in the United States (University of Missouri-Columbia). The researcher requested university professors to encourage their students to take part in the experiment, whereas, some of them permitted the researcher to come into class and promote the study. As shown on the university's website, "Mizzou has a diverse enrollment with 28,000 students from every county in Missouri, every state in the nation and 100 countries," which signifies the diversity of the group that was recruited for this study.

The nationality of participants was considered as a between-subjects variable in this study, since there was a categorization of participants according to their nationality. The participants of the experiment were divided according to their nationality, and hence, were given specific pretest and posttest questionnaire that corresponded with their national background.

#### *Experimental Treatment Grouping (Research Group)*

The participants of the study were divided into two research group, according to whether or not they were exposed to the experiment treatment. The first group was referred to as the "experiment group". Its members were exposed to the experimental treatment for the period of a month, where they interacted through a closed Facebook group. This group also took the pretest and posttest. The second group was the "Control

group,” whose members were given the pretest and posttest without exposure to the experimental treatment (Facebook interaction). The experimental treatment grouping (research group) was dealt with as a between-subjects variable, since there were two groups of participants; one was exposed to the experimental treatment (Facebook group), and the other one was a control group that only took the pretest and posttest without exposure to the experimental treatment.

### *Time*

The third independent variable that the researcher controlled for was time; pre versus post interaction time intervals. The interaction itself was a result of creating a closed Facebook group. Time was considered a within subject factor, since participants were divided into two groups, as shown above, and each group was exposed to the pretest and posttest, with differences in being exposed to the experimental design.

As shown in the experiment procedure, participants had the flexibility of discussing issues relevant to the study, in addition to having the freedom of posting multimedia content on the group’s wall, adding participants as their friends, and exchanging personal messages amongst themselves. The researcher, being also the facilitator (administrator) of the Facebook Discussion group, sent weekly reminders to the members of the Facebook group to encourage them to take part in the discussion. The discussion was closely monitored by the researcher, and the researcher was ready to intervene in the discussion only if some comments and posts displayed by the participants needed to be geared back towards the discussion, or in cases when the group guidelines were breached by any participant. Luckily, the researcher did not assess any situation that

caused him to intervene in the discussion or react upon any comment, and the discussion was left to flow in its natural direction.

The researcher only regard the ‘public’ content of the Facebook group discussion for the textual analysis, which were documented through the group itself, as personal interaction, such private correspondence amongst the participants, was left to be self-reported by the participants by the end of the interaction through the posttest questionnaire.

### Dependent Variables

In order to understand the influence of online social networking on Palestinian and American youth participants, the researcher tested the variation in four major dependent variables: *level of interaction*, *psychosocial well-being*, *social capital*, and *image and attitudes towards the ‘other’*.

#### *Level of Interaction*

Petrózi et al. (2007) used a specific scale to measure the level and strength of interaction in *virtual social networks*. Their conceptualization entailed measuring the strength of ties between members of the virtual network, which is “a quantifiable property that characterizes the link between two nodes.” They borrowed Granovetter’s definition of tie strength: “a combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding) and reciprocal services which characterize the tie.” In their study, they asked the participants twelve questions that aimed at assessing the relationships evolving from the interaction. These relationships were grouped into eight categories: positive relationship (1 question), negative relationship (1 question), trust (2

questions), support (3 questions), intimacy (1 question), companionship (1 question), multiplexity (2 questions), and companionship/closeness (1 question) (Please see Table 5). As indicated by the Virtual Tie-Strength (VTS) Scale, following is the operationalization of the sub-concepts:

1. Positive relationship will be measured by asking the participants about which participants do they (individually) like from the group members. Inversely, negative relationships would be measured by asking them whom don't they like;

2. Trust will be measured by asking the participants which of the participant they trust or have trusted;

3. Support will be measured by three questions about whether the participants has asked, has been asked, feels that he/she could ask a favor from another participant.

4. Intimacy will be measured by asking the participants about private correspondences with any other group member(s).

5. Companionship and closeness will be measured by asking the participants which other participants do they consider to be their 'virtual friends,' and which ones do they wish to meet in person.

6. Interaction multiplexity will be measured through asking the participant whether they had or would like to have discussions about topics different from those of the Facebook group.

Table 5.

Level of interaction questions (as they appeared in posttest questionnaire)

	Question	Measure
1	Was there someone you liked from the participants of the Facebook group?	Positive relationship
2	Was there someone you did not like from the participants of the Facebook group?	Negative relationship
3	Was there anyone from the Facebook group that you have trusted (i.e. added them as a friend on Facebook, gave them your personal email address)?	Trust
4	Was there anyone from the Facebook group that has trusted you (i.e. added you as a friend on Facebook, gave you their personal email address)?	Trust
5	Did you ask of the participants from the Facebook group for help or a favor	Support
6	Has anyone from the Facebook group asked you for help or a favor?	Support
7	Is there anyone in the Facebook group that you feel you could ask for help or a favor from?	Support
8	Did you have private correspondence with someone from the Facebook group (i.e. exchanged private messages, emails, phone calls, etc...)?	Intimacy
9	Is there anyone from the Facebook group that consider your 'virtual friend'?	Companionship
10	Did you discuss any topics other than those in the Facebook group with any of the participants?	Multiplexity
11	Is there anyone from the Facebook group that you would like to have a discussion with about topics other than those of the Facebook group?	Multiplexity
12	Is there any participants from the Facebook group that you would like to meet in person?	Companionship/ closeness

### *Psychosocial Well-Being*

The researcher utilized the adaptation of Rosenberg's *self-esteem scale* and the *Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)* by Ellison et al. (2007). In their study of the effect of Facebook on its users, Ellison et al. (2007) formulated a combined scale of 12 statements, which was rated by participants on a 5-point Likert scale. The combined scale was utilized and modified to suit the purpose of this study. With regards to self-esteem, participants will be exposed to statement about their self-worth, good qualities, tendency to failure, competency, pride in what they do, positive attitude towards self, and overall self-satisfaction. The self-satisfaction with life scale included five statements to the participants to rate. These statements include ones about closeness of life to ideal, excellence of life conditions, overall satisfaction with life, level of achievement, and desire to change life path.

The measure for psychosocial well-being is categorized into two main categories: self-esteem scale (12 questions), and satisfaction with life scale (5 questions). The self-esteem scale includes questions about whether the participant feels that he/se is "a person of worth," has "a number of good qualities," feels that he/she is "inclined to [...] failure," able to "do thing as well as most other people," feels that he/she "do[es] not have to be proud of," takes "a positive attitude toward [him/her]self," and whether he/she is "satisfied with [him/her]self." With regards to the satisfaction with life scale, the researcher will the participants whether they feel that their life "is close to [their] ideal," "the conditions of [their lives] are excellent," whether they are "satisfied with [their] life," whether they have gotten "important things" they wanted in life, and under the

condition that they live their lives again, whether they would change anything in their lives (Ellison et al., 2007, p. 9-10).

The psychosocial well-being instrument was tested in both the pretest and posttest in an attempt to understand whether the online interaction among participants would influence their well-being. The overall measure for well-being was obtained through factor analysis of all the items in the self-esteem and satisfaction with life scale for both the pretest ( $\alpha=.881$ ) and the posttest ( $\alpha=.888$ ). Furthermore, the self-esteem scale was factor analyzed for the pretest ( $\alpha=.819$ ) and the posttest ( $\alpha=.824$ ), as well as the satisfaction with life scale for the pretest ( $\alpha=.871$ ) and the posttest ( $\alpha=.860$ ) (Please see Table 6).

### *Social Capital*

Ellison et al. (2007) adopted, in their study, Quan-Haase and Wellman's *Internet-specific social capital* scale. Their new modified scale had 19 statements, which were rated on a 5-point Likert scale by the participants. The scale measured three dimensions of social capital: bridging, bonding, and maintained social capital. For this study, social capital was measured three times. The first one was through the pretest questionnaire ( $\alpha=.937$ ), which included the scales for bridging social capital ( $\alpha=.904$ ), bonding social capital ( $\alpha=.799$ ), and maintained social capital ( $\alpha=.830$ ). The second time social capital was measured was during the posttest ( $\alpha=.944$ ), and again, the scale comprised of three sub-scales; bridging social capital ( $\alpha=.934$ ), bonding social capital ( $\alpha=.801$ ), and maintained social capital ( $\alpha=.873$ ).

Table 6.

*Summary Statistics and Factor Analysis Results for Psychosocial Well-Being*

Individual Items and Scale <sup>a</sup>	Pretest			Posttest		
	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loading
<b>Psychosocial Well-Being</b> (Cronbach's alpha Pretest=.881, Posttest=.888) <sup>b</sup>	<b>2.20</b>	<b>.495</b>	--	<b>2.14</b>	<b>.512</b>	--
<b>Self-Esteem Scale</b> (Cronbach's alpha Pretest=.819, Posttest=.824) <sup>b</sup>	<b>1.66</b>	<b>.505</b>	--	<b>2.05</b>	<b>.392</b>	--
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equally plane with others	1.55	.642	.670	1.45	.538	.729
I feel I have a number of good qualities	1.49	.569	.785	1.49	.502	.797
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure (reversed)	1.79	.840	.646	1.83	.924	.562
I am able to do things as well as most other people	1.73	.684	.660	1.74	.579	.737
I feel I do not have much to be proud of (reversed)	1.71	.764	.701	1.83	.868	.637
I take a positive attitude toward myself	1.84	.730	.778	1.81	.714	.814
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	1.92	.773	.653	1.90	.764	.760
<b>Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)</b> (Cronbach's alpha Pretest=.871, Posttest=.860) <sup>b</sup>	<b>2.46</b>	<b>.860</b>	--	<b>2.26</b>	<b>.831</b>	--
In most ways my life is close to my ideal	2.41	1.021	.753	2.31	1.013	.752
The conditions of my life are excellent	2.45	1.106	.855	2.14	1.022	.862
I am satisfied with my life	2.16	.0960	.867	2.07	.964	.846
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	2.45	1.066	.812	2.25	1.010	.824
If I could live my time over, I would change almost nothing	2.87	1.092	.780	2.56	1.190	.737

Notes. <sup>a</sup> Individual items ranged from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree. <sup>b</sup> Cronbach's alpha was measured for both the pretest and posttest

The third time social capital was measured was also through the posttest, where the scale items were modified to correspond to the Facebook group interaction, thereby, measuring online social capital ( $\alpha=.913$ ). The online (Facebook) social capital also comprised of the three sub-scales: bridging social capital ( $\alpha=.876$ ), bonding social capital ( $\alpha=.837$ ), and maintained social capital ( $\alpha=.840$ ).

The three scales (pretest, posttest and online social capital) were factor analyzed in two stages. The first was analyzing all the items into the overall social capital measures, while the second stage entailed analyzed the sub-scales as a way of making sure that “that the items reflected three distinct dimensions” (Ellison, et al., 2007). The researcher adapted this scale to the purpose of the study, by rephrasing some of the statements to suit the study. The two scales in the pretest and posttest, excluding the scale for the online social capital, formed measures for ‘offline’ social capital, referring to the way the participants perceived their social capital within the framework of their own communities. On the other hand, the online social capital scale measured how the participants of the experiment group, in particular, felt about their social capital within the framework of the Facebook group as their ‘virtual community.’

1. Bridging Social Capital measured whether the participants felt part of the community, interested in what goes on in it, thought it is a good place to be, were willing to contribute to it morally and financially, whether it made them want to try new things, felt part of a larger community, were willing to spend time on related activities, had the ability to make new contacts, and reminded them that the world is connected.

Table 7.

## Summary Statistics and Factor Analysis Results for Social Capital

Individual Items and Scale <sup>a</sup>	Pretest			Posttest			Facebook (online)		
	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loading
<b>Social Capital (Cronbach's alpha Pretest=.937, Posttest=.944, Facebook=.913)<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>2.13</b>	<b>.496</b>	--	<b>2.04</b>	<b>.585</b>	--	<b>2.81</b>	<b>.577</b>	--
<b>Bridging Social Capital (Cronbach's alpha Pretest=.904, Posttest=.934, Facebook=.876)<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>2.03</b>	<b>.628</b>	--	<b>1.99</b>	<b>.649</b>	--	<b>2.40</b>	<b>.598</b>	--
I feel I am part of my community (school, society, organization, etc...)	1.88	.769	.737	1.81	.700	.781	2.43	.870	.539
I am interested in what goes on in my community	1.93	.764	.709	1.88	.749	.777	2.25	.704	.744
My community is a good place to be	2.09	.931	.768	1.94	.842	.853	2.15	.547	.722
I would be willing to contribute money to my community after I start earning money	2.12	.857	.744	2.07	.836	.783	3.43	.945	.573
Interacting with people from my community makes me want to try new things	1.97	.796	.819	2.01	.790	.870	2.50	.873	.794
Interacting with people from my community makes me feel like a part of a larger community	2.02	.743	.831	1.97	.790	.872	2.22	.885	.795
I am willing to spending time to support general activities in my community	2.00	.768	.744	1.97	.764	.840	2.57	.981	.822
In my community, I come into contact with new people all the time	2.12	.943	.757	2.14	.912	.733	2.27	.861	.733
Interacting with people at my community reminds me that everyone in the world is connected	2.15	.993	.711	2.09	.913	.802	1.90	.706	.718
<b>Bonding Social Capital (Cronbach's alpha Pretest=.799, Posttest=.801, Facebook=.837)<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>2.06</b>	<b>.683</b>	--	<b>2.03</b>	<b>.630</b>	--	<b>3.53</b>	<b>.783</b>	--
There are several people in my community I trust to solve my problems	2.15	.979	.817	2.08	.874	.670	3.49	1.014	.870
If I needed an emergency loan of \$100, I know someone in my community I can turn to	1.92	.902	.842	1.86	.781	.729	3.73	.971	.901
There is someone in my community I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions	1.81	.833	.899	1.80	.736	.807	3.24	1.088	.853
The people I interact with in my community would be good job references for me	1.97	.832	.781	1.91	.737	.625	3.60	.925	.804
I do not know people in my community well enough to get them do anything important (reversed)	2.37	1.048	.415	2.47	1.044	.200	3.59	1.026	.447
<b>Maintained Social Capital (Cronbach's alpha Pretest=.830, Posttest=.873, Facebook=.840)<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>.590</b>	--	<b>1.99</b>	<b>.585</b>	--	<b>2.78</b>	<b>.793</b>	--
I'd be able to find out about events in another town from someone in my community	2.12	.782	.721	2.11	.815	.838	2.22	.924	.713
If I needed to, I could ask an acquaintance in my community to do a small favor for me	1.91	.672	.775	1.87	.605	.834	2.93	1.014	.862
I'd be able to stay with a community if traveling to a difference city/country	2.16	.881	.811	2.01	.773	.831	3.14	1.045	.624
I'd be able to find information about a job or internship from a community acquaintance	2.01	.740	.792	2.00	.728	.781	2.81	1.014	.850
It would be easy to find people to invite to a community event (reunion, celebration, etc...)	1.84	.745	.767	1.91	.688	.807	2.73	1.110	.847

Notes. <sup>a</sup> Individual items ranged from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree. <sup>b</sup> Cronbach's alpha was measured for both the pretest, posttest, and the Facebook group specific social capital measure

2. Bonding Social Capital measured how the participants felt their community could provide trust to solve personal problem, and whether they could rely on the community acquaintances in emergencies, for advice, and mentorship.

3. Maintained Social Capital was measured through asking the participants to self-report their ability to mobilize and be mobilized, such as finding out about related events, asking favors from each other, staying at a community acquaintance's place if traveling to his/her area, getting useful information about jobs and related opportunities, and ease of organizing events.

#### *Image and Stereotypes*

The researcher developed a final measurement, which was adapted to the specific situation of the experiment. Deriving from the previous literature, there were a number of negative and positive associations with both national groups. To fit the purpose of this study, the items were unified for all participants, regardless of their nationality, or the research group they took part. Participants were requested to self-report their agreement or disagreement to the items on 5-point Likert-type scale. The researcher included an essay question in the pretest, asking the participants to describe the opposing national group. After analyzing the results of these questions, and as discussed later in the results section, there were no prevalent trends that could be added to the list of items in the questionnaire. The items were the same in the pretest and posttest, yet participants were asked parallel questions with modifying the national group association. For instance, for the American participants' questionnaires, the statements were phrased in a way to describe the Palestinians, and vice versa.

Negative images included association of terrorism, violence, disrespect to women, having different views than 'us,' and being all alike. Another item was added to the list of negative images and stereotypes, where Americans were asked whether they thought the goal of Palestinians is to wipe out Israel, and conversely, the Palestinians were asked whether they thought that goal of Americans is to wipe out Iraq. The researcher carried out factor analysis for these items to create a combined scale for negative image for the pretest ( $\alpha=.798$ ) and the posttest ( $\alpha=.784$ ).

On the other hand, positive images and associations were also derived from previous literature, and the scale was comprised of 12 items. These items included associations with innocence, peacefulness, valuing life, generosity, and religiousness. Other items asked the participants to rate whether they would trust a member of the opposite national group, ask him/her for a small favor, can be friends with him/her, thinks he/she could be friends with a member of the opposite national group, whether they can discuss different topics with them, and whether they would like to meet a member of the opposite national group. The last two items were not included in the factor analysis, because they direction was different between the questionnaire of the Palestinians and American. The Americans were asked whether they thought Palestinians have the right to their independent state, and whether they believed that Palestinians were still occupied by Israel. Conversely, Palestinians were asked whether they thought that Americans are still occupying Iraq, and whether Americans support Israel more than the Palestinians. These two items were deleted, also, because they did not load well on the factor. Positive images were factor analyzed for the pretest ( $\alpha=.824$ ) and the posttest ( $\alpha=.846$ ).

Items of the both the negative and positive image scales were factor analyzed and computed into a combined image variable for both the pretest ( $\alpha=.882$ ) and the posttest ( $\alpha=.864$ ) (Please see Table 8).

Table 8.

*Summary Statistics and Factor Analysis Results for Image and Stereotypes*

Individual Items and Scale <sup>1</sup>	Pretest			Posttest		
	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loading
<b>Image (Cronbach's alpha Pretest=.882, Posttest=.864)<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>.528</b>	--	<b>2.38</b>	<b>.507</b>	--
<b>Negative Images (Cronbach's alpha=.798, Posttest=.784)<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>2.52</b>	<b>.701</b>	--	<b>2.47</b>	<b>.689</b>	--
I think Palestinians/Americans are terrorists (reversed) <sup>c</sup>	1.90	.931	.866	1.88	.931	.826
I think Palestinians/Americans are violent (reversed) <sup>c</sup>	2.34	1.067	.875	2.18	1.050	.790
I think Palestinians/Americans do not respect women (reversed) <sup>c</sup>	2.58	1.009	.631	2.39	.980	.700
I believe Palestinians/Americans have different views of life when compared to Americans/Palestinians (reversed) <sup>c</sup>	4.017	.991	.508	3.94	.890	.337
I think Palestinians are all alike (reversed) <sup>c</sup>	1.83	.764	.607	1.95	.896	.686
I think the goal of Palestinians is to wipe out Israel/Americans wipe out Iraq (reversed)	2.51	1.150	.730	2.50	1.207	.766
<b>Positive Images (Cronbach's alpha=.824, Posttest=.846)<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>2.41</b>	<b>.502</b>	--	<b>2.32</b>	<b>.538</b>	--
I think Palestinians/Americans are innocent	3.21	.857	.583	3.12	.855	.502
I think Palestinians/Americans are peaceful	3.12	.822	.607	2.85	.894	.622
I think Palestinians/Americans value life	2.26	.893	.539	2.17	.966	.478
I assume Palestinians/Americans are generous	2.82	.767	.539	2.60	.859	.638
I believe Palestinians/Americans are religious	2.44	.912	.323	2.53	.962	.559
I would trust a Palestinian/American	2.40	.828	.742	2.24	.881	.683
I would ask a Palestinians/American for a small favor	2.39	.826	.772	2.27	.881	.775
I think I can be friends with a Palestinian/American	1.78	.635	.846	1.77	.674	.834
I think I can discuss different topics with a Palestinian/American	1.77	.753	.683	1.75	.636	.733
I would like to meet a Palestinian/American	1.86	.797	.653	1.87	.740	.729

Notes. <sup>a</sup> Individual items ranged from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree. <sup>b</sup> Cronbach's alpha was measured for both the pretest, posttest, and the Facebook group specific social capital measure. <sup>c</sup> Items were reversed to unify the direction of the items to fit into the overall factor.

## Control Variables

Wimmer and Dominick (2006) state that control variables “eliminate unwanted influences” and “are used to ensure that the results of the study are due to the independent variables, not to another source.” The researcher controlled for three groups of control variables: media use, participants’ demographics, and political knowledge and orientation.

### *Media use*

With regards to media use, the researcher asked the participants self report the amount they dedicate for reading newspapers, watching television, listening to the radio and using online media, both on a weekly and daily basis. Furthermore, this group of variables included questions regarding the type(s) of media the participants get their information from, with regards to both Palestine and the United States.

### *Demographic variables*

The second set of control variables included demographic questions. The participants were asked to self-report their age, gender, level of education, income level, ethnic background (for Americans), and geographical background (for Palestinians). The researcher chose not to ask the Palestinian participants about their ethnic background, since they all came from the same ethnic group, but instead, the geographical background (whether they live in a city, village or a refugee camp), was considered as a parallel indicator of the influence of social background.

With regards to demographic information, both American and Palestinian participants were asked to self-report their age and gender. As for Americans, they were asked to select their ethnic background, while the Palestinians were asked two questions

to determine the equivalent of ethnicity in the Palestinian society, where they were asked to identify whether they live in a city, village or refugee camp, in addition to asking them about which part of the Palestinian territories do they live in (central West Bank (WB), southern WB, northern WB, the Gaza Strip, or other). All participants were asked to self-report their level of education and income level. For the income-level, the choices for the answer were varied between the Palestinians and Americans due to social norms. Americans were asked to determine their level of annual household income, while the Palestinians were given choices for their household monthly income.

The researcher asked the American participants to identify their party affiliation (strong Democrat, weak Democrat, Independent – Democrat, Independent – Republican, weak Republican, strong republication, or apolitical). For the Palestinian participants, the choices for political identification were different, due to the difference in political party identifiers: strong Fatah, weak Fatah, strong Hamas, weak Hamas, strong Left, weak Left, Independent – Fatah, Independent – Hamas, Independent – Left, or apolitical. The second question requested the participants to self-report their positioning on liberalism/conservatism scale, which was a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative). The third question dealt with political participation. The American participants were asked to self report whether they anticipated voting in the November 2008 presidential elections, while the Palestinians were asked whether they had voted in the 2006 parliamentary elections. The fourth question was unified for both Americans and Palestinians and asked them about the level of interest in international politics. The fifth question was more specific to political knowledge. American participants were asked to identify the Palestinian president from a

list of Palestinian political figures, conversely Palestinians were asked to identify the frontrunner of the Democratic Party in the 2008 presidential elections from a list of names. The sixth question also dealt with political knowledge; Americans were asked whether they think Palestine is an independent states, and Palestinians were asked whether the United States of America includes 52 states. The seventh question was unified, and asked the participants to identify who is Nicolas Sarkozy from a list of choices.

#### *Political orientation and knowledge*

Finally, the third set of control variables was focused on investigating the political orientation and knowledge of the participants. The researcher borrowed from a questionnaire used by Dr. Alfred Cooper Drury, associate professor of political science at the University of Missouri Columbia. The researcher did not use the full questionnaire instrument, but rather chose the questions that were related to the study. The researcher asked the participants about their party identification, political ideology, level of interest in international politics, and political knowledge (Drury, in press). Some of the questions were paraphrased to suit the study. In addition, the questions were not identical to both the Palestinian and American participants, since there are different identifiers of the variables mentioned above.

#### Experimental Design and Procedure

The researcher utilized a 2 x 2 x 2 mixed (between-within subject) factorial design. The researcher recruited participants (N=136) from both the United States and the occupied Palestinian territory (including East Jerusalem) for this study. The only within-subjects factor was time, where all participants will be exposed to the pretest and posttest

questionnaires. With regards to the between-subject factors, the group of participants was divided into two; the experiment group (N=81), which took both the pretest and posttest, and were also exposed to the experimental treatment (the Facebook discussion group), and the other group, which was the control group (N=56), was only given the pretest and posttest questionnaire without being exposed to the experimental treatment.

#### *Pre-Experiment Questionnaire Testing*

The researcher examined the pretest and posttest questionnaires before requesting participants to answer them. A group of six (evenly divided between Palestinians and Americans) individuals helped with filling out the questionnaires. The purpose of pre-experiment questionnaire testing was to evaluate the questionnaire and determine whether the participants comprehend the questions and are able to fill out the questionnaires without any problems. Respondents were asked to report any misunderstanding, complex question wording, as well as any inappropriate phrasing for questions.

#### *Recruiting Participants*

As mentioned earlier, participants were recruited from Palestine and the United States. The researcher cooperated with PYALARA and university professors who helped with encouraging young people to take in the experiment. The role of the organization(s) and professor(s) was to provide contact information for potential participants. As for Palestinian participants, the researcher acquired a permission letter from the director general of PYALARA (Please see Appendix A). As a result a staff member of PYALARA contacted potential participants, gathered their contact information, and asked them about their interest in taking part in the study. The staff member, then, emailed the researcher a full list of over 80 participants, who were contacted and

requested to take part in the study. Some of the participants, later, expressed to not participate in the study, in addition to a number of cases where participants requested to withdraw from the study, due to the fact that they were busy with work or school.

With regards to the American participants, the researcher contacted professors from a Midwestern university in the United States, to seek participant recruitment. Two professors, generously, granted the researcher the permission to come into their classrooms and promote the study. As a result of this, around 35 participants were recruited. The remaining participants were recruited through coordination with another professor who granted the researcher the privilege to promote the study through the Journalism School SONA system. For the same reasons stated above, some participants wither expressed disinterest to take part in the study, or withdrew their participation as they were occupied with school work.

Since the study utilized a convenience sample, the researcher did not randomize the assignment of participants to the research groups (experiment vs. control). As the researcher received the contact information of participants, he started filling out the spots for the experiment group, on a first-come first-assigned basis. After the number of participants of the experiment groups reached the desired size, the participants started to assign the participants for the control group.

Due to the nature of the study, and the need to conduct repeated measures, each participant was assigned a special code, which they were requested to insert in every questionnaire they filled out for the study. The participant ID codes were formulated by combining the abbreviations of their nationality and research group, together with a sequential number assignment. For example, if a participants is American, and she was

part of the experiment group and was assigned as the fourth person in the experiment group, her code would be (AE04).

### *Participants*

As mentioned elsewhere, the researcher recruited Palestinian and American young people (N=136) to take part in this study. However, due to the long period of the study, and other factors, the study faced an experimental mortality rate of 11.8%. As a result the number of participants dropped down to 120. Having said this, and as a means to prevent the influence of the experimental mortality on the results of the study, the researcher carried out listwise deletion of all the participants who chose not to continue the study and take part in the posttest stage. Acock (2005) states that listwise deletion is “the most common solution to missing values” (p. 1015). The author explains that the missing data has to comply with the conditions of MCAR in order to qualify for listwise deletion. MCAR is short of *Missing Completely at Random*. To qualify as MCAR, one has to think “of the data set as a large matrix, the missing values are randomly distributed throughout the matrix” (p. 1014), hence listwise or case deletion would be a useful thing to do.

Worthy of mentioning is that the researcher did not compute the listwise deletion when conducting the different statistical tests, but rather eliminated the respondents who did not answer any of the posttest questions. Therefore, the number of participants who qualified for analysis was 120, divided according to research group (Experiment group=73; control group=47), with around 58% of all participants being American, and 72% of the sample comprised of females. With regards to racial background of American participants, the majority (89.2%) identified themselves as “White/Caucasian (Non-Hispanic White)”.

With regards to the Palestinian participants, asking them about their racial background was not a valid question, hence, two questions replaced the race questions, where they were asked about their geographical background. Results showed that the majority of Palestinian participants (86.7%) lived in a city, while 13.3% were from a village, and none of the participants were from a refugee camp. With regards to geographical residence location, a little more than half of the participants (51.1%) came from central West Bank (including East Jerusalem), while the other participants came from the Gaza Strip, northern West Bank, southern West Bank, and other places, respectively (15.6%, 13.3%, 8.9%, 11.1%, respectively).

The majority of all participants have Bachelor's degree (45.6), while the remaining participants were split between high-school graduates and Master's degree holders (39.6% and 15.3%, respectively). With regards to income levels, Palestinians and Americans were asked different questions, depending on the socioeconomic norms. Americans were asked about their family annual income, while Palestinians were asked about the families' monthly income level. As for Americans, the highest percentage of income levels (36.4%) was for the range between \$65,000 - \$125,999. On the other hand, the highest percentage of monthly income level for the participants' families was under \$2,000/month, with a percentage of 31.8% (Please see Table 9).

Table 9.

*Sample demographics, overall and by nationality*

	<i>Overall</i>		<i>Palestinian</i>		<i>American</i>	
	Mean or % (N)	S.D.	Mean or % (N)	S.D.	Mean or % (N)	S.D.
Gender						
male	25.8% (31)		36.0% (18)		18.6% (13)	
female	65.8% (79)		54.0% (27)		74.3% (52)	
Age	23.84	10.06	24.09	4.04	23.68	12.64
Ethnicity						
white					89.2% (58)	
non-white					10.8% (7)	
Residence						
city			86.7% (39)			
village			13.3% (6)			
Geographic location						
West Bank			73.3% (33)			
Gaza Strip			15.6% (7)			
Other			11.1% (5)			
Income <sup>a</sup>	3.85	1.51	3.43	1.61	4.14	1.38
Education <sup>b</sup>	1.76	.70	2.11	.57	1.51	.68
Facebook members	100.0% (120)		100.0% (50)		100.0% (70)	

Notes: N=120; Palestinian: N=50; American: N=70

<sup>a</sup> represents household income level, measured annually for American participants (1=None-\$14,999, 2=\$15,000-\$34,999, 3=\$35,000-\$64,999, 4=\$65,000-\$124,999, 5=\$125,000 or more, and 6=Don't know), and measure monthly for Palestinian participants (1=None-\$999, 2=\$1,000-\$1,999, 3=\$2,000-\$2,999, 4=\$3,000-\$3,999, 5=\$4,000 or more, and 6=Don't know)

<sup>b</sup> represents the highest educational degree participants earned, measured for all participants (1=high-school, 2=bachelor's degree, 3=master's degree, 4=Ph.D. degree, and 5=none of the above)

### *Pretest*

After organizing the lists of participants, participants were sent individual emails, where they were thanked for their interest in the study, and were explained the different stages of participation. Each individual email included the explanation of the experimental procedure. Depending on the research group and the nationality of the participants, a special website link including the specific pretest questionnaire was added to the email. An electronic copy of the *Informed Consent Form* was attached to the email (Please see Appendix B). Participants were requested to carefully read the consent form, sign it, and attach it to a reply email to the researcher's message. They were also requested to follow the pretest questionnaire link to complete the questionnaire. They were also told that they will be contacted within a month to fill out the posttest questionnaire. Participants from the experiment group were also informed that they would be involved in interacting with Palestinian/American youth for the period of a month via a closed Facebook group. Upon completion of the web-based pretest questionnaire, the participants were electronically directed to the Facebook group webpage.

The pretest questionnaire is comprised of 34 questions that were divided into twelve pages. The questionnaire measured for only three of the four dependent variables in addition to the secondary variables. These variables are the *psychosocial well-being*, *social capital*, and *images and attitudes of the 'other'*. The reason for excluding the level and strength of interaction from the pretest was due to the fact that the interaction has not taken place yet. The goal of the pretest was to establish a ground understanding of the participants, especially the images and stereotypes they perceive of members of the other

national group. Both groups of the participants, the experiment and control groups, will take the same pretest questionnaire. The researcher used [www.freeonlinesurveys.com](http://www.freeonlinesurveys.com) to distribute the questionnaire, where the researcher built four forms of the questionnaire; the first is for Palestinian participants from the experiment group, the second is for American participants of the experiment group, the third is for Palestinians from the control group, and finally, the fourth form will be for Americans from the control group (Please see Appendix C). Each participants had to insert his/her special code combination at the beginning of the questionnaire.

The first section of the questionnaire has four multiple choice descriptive questions that measure whether the participants have a Facebook account, for how long, duration of daily usage and the number of friends each participant has on Facebook. The second page included one question, where participants were requested to rate six statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale regarding the way Facebook influences the participants' lives.

The third page was dedicated to measure the participants' psychosocial well-being. The researcher borrowed the instrument adapted by Ellison et al. (2007) that aims at measuring the participants' psychosocial well-being. The instrument, as explained by the authors is an adapted combination of two measurement scales; *Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale* and the *Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)*. The section included twelve statements that the participants are requested to rate on a 5-point Likert-type scale, to show whether they agree or disagree with the statements.

The fourth page of the pretest dealt with measuring the participants' social capital. The researcher adopts the scale developed by Ellison et al. (2007), which is an adaptation

of the *Internet Specific Social Capital Scale* that was developed by Quan-Haase and Wellman. As explained earlier, the researcher is looking at three types of social capital: bridging, bonding and maintained social capital. Hence, the researcher has modified the nineteen statements that Ellison et al. have developed, in order to suit this experiment. The questions related to bridging social capital were focused on how the participants perceive themselves as part of their own community, be it their university, their social club or organization. Questions regarding bonding social capital focused on the human relationships with other people from the community. Finally the maintained social capital will be measured through asking the participants about the relationships they have with people from the community that are more long-term.

The fifth page of the pretest asked three questions about the participants past experience with traveling to the US/Palestine, as well as interacting (offline) with members from the opposite national group. American participants were asked whether they have ever traveled to the Holy Land (Palestine/Israel), Palestinians were asked whether they traveled to the US, and both national groups were asked to specify how the number of visits they carried out to the opposite country. Furthermore, the participants were asked a multiple choice question, where they were asked to select all that applies to them with regards to their previous experience with members of the opposite national group. The participants were asked whether they have interacted face-to-face, have a friend, exchanged letters, chatted, exchanged Facebook messages, emailed or interacted through blogs with any members of the opposite national group.

The sixth page dealt with the perceived images and stereotypes the participants have of members from the other national group. This section included eighteen

statements that the participants were requested to rate on a 5-point Likert-type scale. These statements were identified by looking at the previous literature that studied the images of Palestinians and Americans as perceived by each other. The researcher asked the same type of questions to all the participants, regardless of their nationality, with alteration of whom the questions were addressed to. For example, as the previous literature shows that Palestinians are portrayed as terrorists, so one of the statements in the pretest of the American participants is “I think Palestinians are terrorists”. The researcher believes that in order to maintain objectivity and refrain from subjective judgment, a similar statement should be rated by the Palestinian participants about how they perceive Americans.

The seventh page included an open-ended question, where the participants are requested to write a short descriptive essay of how they perceive people from the other nationality. The purpose of this question, as mentioned earlier was to identify whether the participants have other image and stereotypes of their counterparts.

The eighth and ninth sections of the pretest dealt with testing for the first set of control variables. The section has eight descriptive questions about the media usage of participants, and fourteen statements that are topic-specific. The statements will measure for which medium do the participants get their news from when it comes to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the United States of America.

The tenth section requested the participants to self-report their political party identification, positioning on the liberalism-conservatism scale, political participation, and interest in International Relations. The eleventh page included three questions that were focused on the participants’ political knowledge, which were also rephrased and

modified according to the participants' nationality. The final, twelfth page, included five demographic questions about age, gender, ethnic/geographical background, level of education, and family income level.

### *Experimental Treatment*

Participants from the control group were thanked upon submitting their answers, and were informed that they would be contacted in the period of a month to complete the posttest questionnaire. As for the participants of the experiment group, they were redirected from the pretest questionnaire webpage to the Facebook discussion group page. The researcher has personalized the setting of the Facebook group in a way that participants will request to join the group, and the researcher, being the administrator of the group, will accept their requests. The reason for doing that is to control for two things: first, it allowed the researcher to accept the participants' request after he made sure that they have filled out the pretest questionnaire and sent their consent forms, and second, it allowed the researcher to have some control over the timing of the start point of discussion.

After getting more than 70% of the experiment group participants' pretest responses, the researcher accepted all the pending requests of participants to join the Facebook group. The researcher decided to start the discussions on April 4, 2008, convinced that since a high percentage of participants have been ready for the next stage of the study, it would cause some sort of disconnect and disinterest if the researcher waited for all the participants to request joining the group. Worthy of mentioning is that the researcher started collecting the data about two weeks before starting the discussion,

so any additional delay would have caused the risk of losing participants, and raising the experimental mortality rate.

Upon permitting participants to join the Facebook group, the researcher sent a mass message through a special Facebook function to all the members of the group, informing the participants that the discussions have started and encouraging them to express their opinion on a variety of unlimited issues. The researcher also posted the same message on the main group discussion wall. In addition, the researcher posted the guidelines for participation as outlined by the *Informed Consent Form*, as a separate discussion topic. The guidelines included encouragement for active participation, call for good conduct, refraining from the use of insensitive, obscene, offensive, and/or harmful language, respect to other participants and their opinions, avoid posting irrelevant, offensive, insensitive, obscene, and/or harmful multimedia content, committing to confidentiality, and expressing genuine opinion (Please see Appendix D).

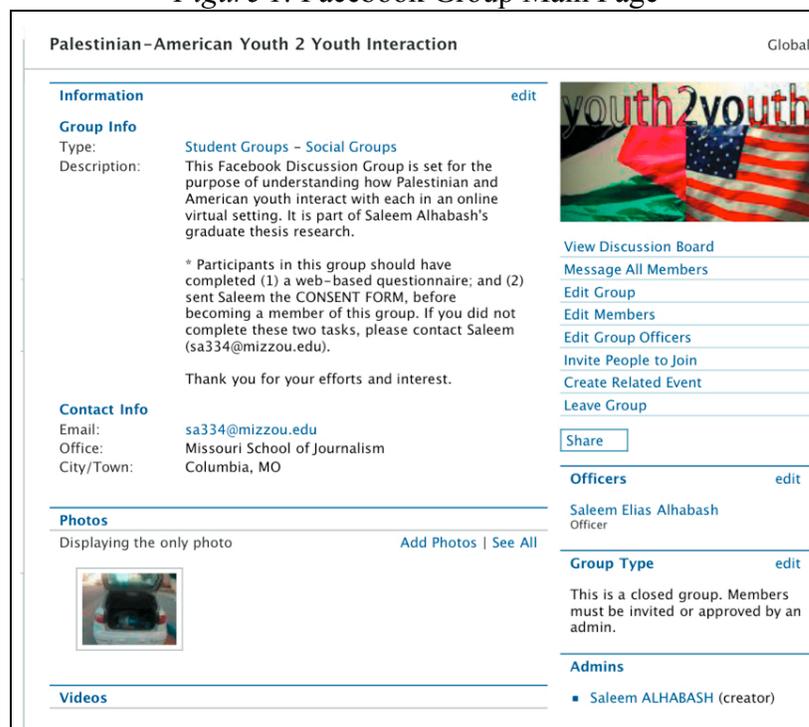
Participants were informed that the Facebook group was a forum to discuss issues related to Palestine and the United States. They were also informed that they have the freedom to express their opinions in a confidential setting, and that the content of the discussion in the Facebook group will only be used for the purpose of the researcher's Master's thesis, as the participants will be referred to anonymously.

The researcher administered the Facebook group, and kept track of the discussion among participants. The researchers acted as the facilitator of the discussion, at times when the discussion either slows down or derives from the topic of conversation. For example, to ignite the discussion, the researcher posed a few questions to generate discussion amongst the participants. To that matter, the researcher sent three follow-up

mass messages to the participants of the Facebook group encouraging them to participate, and highlighting the importance of their opinions.

The interaction through the Facebook group was between April 4 – May 4, 2008. In total, there were 197 comments (more than 6 comments/day on average) posted on the various section of the Facebook group. The discussion started on the main group wall, and ended with 56 comments that were mainly focused on politics, the cross-national relations, media bias, and attitudes towards Palestinians and Americans. In addition, the participants started separate thematic categories in the Facebook group, which are referred to as “discussion topics.” The remaining 141 comments were divided into 12 discussion topics, each ranging 1 to 30 comments. There was one photo posted on the photo section, and participants posted 5 media links in the “posted items” section, three of them were by American participants (Please see *Figure 1*).

*Figure 1. Facebook Group Main Page*



### *Posttest*

After the one-month-interaction, all participants from both groups of the study; the experiment and control groups; were sent individual emails. Participants were thanked for their participation in the study, and requested to fill out the posttest questionnaire. Each individual email was matched with the participant's specific code, as well as the special web-based questionnaire version, depending on the participant's nationality and research group. However, the two groups of participants took different posttest questionnaires. Participants of the control group took the same questionnaire from the pretest. As mentioned earlier, each respondent was given a confidential and anonymous identity that will be preserved by the researcher (Please see Appendix E).

The posttest given to the experiment group included 33 questions that are divided into nine pages, while the control group posttest has 21 questions divided into eight pages. The experiment group posttest measured all four of the dependent variables, in an attempt to measure the variance in the participants' responses. Participants were sent another email a week after the previous email was sent reminding them to fill out the questionnaire. The researcher excluded the part from the pretest that inquires about the knowledge and usage of Facebook by the participants, as well as the demographic questions.

#### Experiment group posttest

The first page includes a question that asks the participants to insert the special code they were given. The answers of participants from the pretest will be matched with posttest answers for all participants. The first page also included two other scale

questions. The first of these questions dealt with measuring Facebook intensity, where participants were requested to rate six statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree), the second question asked the participants to rate 5 statements about their participation in the Facebook group as to whether they agree or disagree with them on 5-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree).

The second page included 12 questions dealing with measuring the level of interaction among the participants in the Facebook group. These questions were borrowed from Petrózi et al. (2007) that measure for the level of interaction and the tie strength in *virtual social communities*. In Petrózi's et al. original study, the questions were open-ended, requesting respondents to name people whom they have developed positive/negative relationships with, trusted, requested support from or given support to, as well as questions asking about the intimacy, closeness, companionship and multiplexity of the interaction. In this study, the researcher transformed these questions to yes/no questions, while still asking the participants to name the other participants that correspond to their choices.

The third page included one question where participants were asked to rate 12 statements asking about their psychosocial well-being (self esteem and satisfaction with life). These questions were a replica of the ones in the pretest, and the reason for including them is to investigate whether online interaction can influence the individual and group psychosocial well-being

The fourth and fifth pages included two questions dealing with social capital, in each of the questions the respondents were asked to rate 19 statements about their sense of bridging, bonding and maintained social capital, which were borrowed from Ellison et

al. (2007). The first question replicated the same statements for social capital from the pretest, while the second one had the statements rephrased in a way to fit the Facebook group discussion. The reason for having these two questions is to explore the influence of the online interaction on both the offline and online social capital.

The sixth section of the questionnaire includes the same questions that were asked with regards to the image and stereotypes of each other. However, the researcher excluded the three first descriptive question that ask about the personal experience of the participants, and only included the 18 statements where the participants were required to rate the statements regarding the image they have of each other. After analyzing the essay questions from the pretest, the researcher could not find any prevalent description, images or stereotypes to be added to the list of statements, since participants either expressed the lack of experience with the opposite national group, or refrained from expressing descriptive opinions. It was noticeable that Palestinian participants, in many instances, made clear the distinction between the attitudes towards the US government and its foreign policy, and their feelings towards the American people. On the other hand, many American respondents expressed no attitude towards the Palestinians due to limited experience, and expressed their opinions within the framework of media images, while mentioning how the US media is biased against Palestinians.

The seventh and eighth pages of the posttest measured for the media usage, in general, and with regards to news related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The ninth page included asked the participants to position themselves on the liberalism-conservatism scale, express their interest in International politics, in addition to asking the same three questions about political knowledge. The reason for excluding the other

control and demographic variables is because the researcher has all these information from the pretest, and thought that it will save some space and time for the posttest, especially that there were new questions to be asked.

#### Control group posttest

The control group posttest was a trimmed-down version of the pretest. There were 21 questions grouped into eight pages. Following is a brief description of the control posttest pages (sections):

1. Two questions: participants code, and the six-item scale question about Facebook intensity;
2. One question: 12-item psychosocial well-being scale;
3. One question: 19-item social capital scale;
4. One question: 18-item image and stereotypes scale;
5. 8 multiple-choice questions on media use;
6. One question: 14-item scale on media assessment and usage; and,
7. 4 multiple-choice questions on control variables.

It is worth mentioning that the researcher is well aware of the disadvantages of repeated measures, be them “*carryover effects*” or the fact that since the questions from both the pretest and posttest overlap, that participants “may figure out the purpose behind the experiment” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 242). With regards to *carryover effects*, the experiment is considered a field online experiment, where the manipulation of variables was governed by the field developments that might occur during the online interaction amongst the participants. Hence, the manipulation of the experiment was controlling for a daily practice of the participants, which should not have an excessive

influence over their responses to both questionnaires. With regards to knowing the purpose of the experiment, the researcher believes that the period of one month that separates the two questionnaires is enough time for them to forget the specifics of the questions asked in the two questionnaires. Furthermore, having an online interaction, where the fact that the participants will engage in the experiment in the convenience of their own personal computers and in their own comfortable environments produces a high potential for expressing their own genuine opinions through their interaction with the other participants in the Facebook group. Since the researcher intends to qualitatively analyze the content of the discussion group, these results present a valid check for the significance of the results of the questionnaires.

#### *Data Analysis*

The results were analyzed on two stages. The first one was the quantitative analysis of the pretest and posttest results, where the researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to conduct repeated measures ANOVA. The second stage of data analysis concerned qualitatively analyzing the text documented through the Facebook group. Signifiers and major thematic categories were analyzed and matched with quantitative results.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

As mentioned earlier, the study recruited Palestinian and American young people (N=136) to take part in this online field experiment. Participants were divided into two research groups; experiment group who was exposed to the experimental treatment (Facebook interaction) in addition to filling out the pretest and posttest questionnaire, and the control group, whose members only took the pretest and posttest questionnaires.

### Summary of the Research Hypotheses

This research aimed at understanding how young Palestinians and American can influence each other's perceived images and stereotypes through an online social networking setting (Facebook interaction). In addition, the research also aimed at investigating whether the participants' level of interaction would be positively influenced, as well as their psychosocial well-being and social capital. Following is a summary of the main research hypotheses:

*H 1: Online social networking will positively influence the level of interaction among participants cross-culturally/cross-nationally.*

*H 2: Online social networking will positively influence the psychosocial well-being of participants from both national groups.*

*H 3: Online social networking will positively influence the participants' social capital (bridging, bonding, and maintained social capital).*

*H 4: Online social networking will have a positive influence on the perceived images and stereotypes participants have of members of the other national group.*

*H 5: Participants' nationality will have an influence on the way they interact through online social networking (their level of interaction, psychosocial well-being, and social capital).*

*H 6: Participants nationality will have an influence on the change in perceptions and image they have of each other.*

### Who are the Participants?

The study involved having young Palestinians and American interact with each other through an online social networking setting (Facebook group), with the aim of investigating the impact they would have on each other. In order to understand the results of this study, the researcher believed that the results have to be put into context, through exploring more of the description of the sample.

#### *Facebook usage*

The pretest questionnaire asked the participants about their usage habits of Facebook. Results show that all participants, without exclusion, had a Facebook account, and the highest percentage (23.3%) of participants have been using it for over 29 months. While Palestinian participants appeared to be novice users, with less than half of the respondents (42.0%) self-reporting that they have been using Facebook for 6-11 months, more than a third (37.1%) of the American participants self-reported that they have been using Facebook for more than 29 months. In terms of the amount of time allocated to use Facebook, respondents were more likely to self-report using it between a half to one-and-a-half hour per day (Mean=3.36). With regards to the number of Facebook friends the participants have, the highest percentage (30.0%) is for "400 friends or more," yet the means shows that the overall group of participants tends to approach the category "201-250 friends," with about 2.5 points for mean difference between the answers of Palestinian and American participants.

The table below also shows some descriptive statistics for the Facebook intensity. By looking at the means, we can infer that the American participants self-reported higher Facebook intensity, bearing in mind that the lower the mean, the more participants agreed with the stated, since the scale was from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Please see Table 10).

Table 10.

*Descriptive Statistics for Facebook usage, overall and by nationality*

Individual items <sup>a</sup>	Overall		Palestinian		American	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Means	S.D.
Do you have a Facebook account? <i>1=yes, 2=no</i>	1.00	.000	1.00	.000	1.00	.000
How long have you been using Facebook? (months) <i>1=less than 6, 2=6-11, 3=12-17, 4=18-23, 5=24-29, 6=over 29</i>	3.67	1.741	2.64	1.241	4.40	1.680
How many minutes/day do you spend on Facebook? <i>1=less than 10, 2=11-30, 3=31-60, 4=61-90, 5=91-120, 6=more than 120</i>	3.36	1.448	3.24	1.364	3.44	1.510
How many total Facebook friends do you have? <i>1=less than 10, 2=11-50, 3=51-100, 4=101-150, 5=151-200, 6=201-250, 7=251-300, 8=301-400, 9= more than 400</i>	5.95	2.553	4.50	2.159	6.99	2.511
Facebook is part of my everyday life	2.08	1.180	2.28	1.144	1.93	1.192
I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook	2.49	.919	2.68	.999	2.35	.837
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while	2.27	.997	2.44	.951	2.14	1.019
Facebook has become part of my daily routine	2.02	1.058	2.10	.953	1.96	1.130
I feel I am part of the Facebook community	2.37	1.019	2.59	.982	2.29	1.045
I would be sorry if Facebook shut down	2.18	1.125	2.42	1.230	2.00	1.015

*Note.* N=120, Palestinians (N=50), Americans (N=70)

<sup>a</sup> Unless provided, response categories ranged from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree

*Media use*

The participants were asked in the pretest to self-report their media use. The results show that the Internet comes in the first place, with regards to both their weekly and daily usage. As for their weekly media use, Internet was followed by television, newspaper, and then radio. On the other hand, when the participants were asked about the time they allocate daily for using the four media types, Internet was followed by newspaper, television, and then radio.

Table 11.

*Descriptive Statistics for media use, overall and by nationality*

		Overall		Palestinian		American	
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D	Means	S.D.
Newspaper:	weekly <sup>a</sup>	2.81	1.329	3.13	1.310	2.58	1.304
	daily <sup>b</sup>	3.43	1.921	4.04	1.846	3.01	1.871
Television	weekly <sup>a</sup>	3.39	1.366	3.44	1.374	3.35	1.370
	daily <sup>c</sup>	2.85	1.422	3.09	1.505	2.68	1.348
Radio	weekly <sup>a</sup>	2.72	1.467	3.13	1.376	2.43	1.469
	daily <sup>c</sup>	1.84	1.373	2.60	1.802	1.33	.587
Internet	weekly <sup>a</sup>	4.88	.357	4.80	.453	4.93	.265
	daily <sup>c</sup>	4.69	1.296	5.09	1.262	4.42	1.257

*Note.* N=120, Palestinians (N=50), Americans (N=70)

<sup>a</sup> Represents weekly media use, measured for different media in days per week (1=None, 2=1-2, 3=3-4, 4=5-6, and 5=7) . <sup>b</sup> Represents the amount of time participants self-reported reading a newspaper, measured in minutes per day (1=Less than 5, 2=6-10, 3=11-15, 4=16-20, 5=21-25, 6=26-30, and 7=More than 30). <sup>c</sup> Represents daily media use, measured (1=Less than 30 minutes, 2=31-60 minutes, 3=1-2 hours, 4=3-4 hours, and 5=more than 4 hours).

## Level of Interaction

The first research hypothesis dealt with testing the level of interaction among the participants of the study, which was only tested for the experiment group, due to the fact that the control group was not exposed to the experimental treatment. The level of interaction was measured by asking the participants 12-yes/no questions about the relationships, trust, support, companionship, intimacy, multiplexity and closeness they developed with the other participants throughout their interaction via the Facebook group. A Chi-Square analysis was carried out and it yielded in the partial support of the first hypothesis.

### *Positive Relationships*

The results showed significant correlation for positive relationship among participants ( $X^2(df)=4.380$ ,  $p=.036$ ), as well as the measure for companionship and closeness ( $X^2(df)=3.912$ ,  $p=.048$ ). By looking at the descriptive statistics for these two questions, we can see that Americans were more likely to self-report the development of positive relationship (51.2%,  $z=1.0$ ), when compared to Palestinians (26.7%,  $z=-1.2$ ). Inversely, when asked as to whether they would like to meet anyone from the Facebook group (companionship/closeness), Palestinians were influenced in a more positive way (46.2%,  $z=1.3$ ), in comparison with Americans, who had a lower percentage (23.3%,  $z=-1.0$ ) of participants expressing their willingness to meet any group member.

Table 12.

*Cross-Tab Results for the Level of Interaction, by nationality*

Question/Measure		Palestinian	American
1 – Positive Relationship	Yes	26.7% (z=-1.2)	51.2% (z=1.0)
	No	73.3% (z=1.0)	48.8% (z=-.9)
	Total	30	43
2 – Negative Relationship	Yes	3.3% (z=-1.3)	16.3% (z=1.1)
	No	96.7% (z=.4)	83.7% (z=-.4)
	Total	30	43
3 – Trust	Yes	10.0% (z=-.4)	20.0% (z=.3)
	No	90.0% (z=.1)	80.0% (z=-.1)
	Total	30	43
4 – Trust	Yes	10.0% (z=-.4)	20.0% (z=.3)
	No	90.0% (z=.1)	80.0% (z=-.1)
	Total	30	43
5 – Support	Yes	0.0% (z=-.9)	4.7% (z=.7)
	No	100.0% (z=.2)	95.3% (z=-.1)
	Total	28	43
6 – Support	Yes	7.1% (z=.8)	2.3% (z=-.6)
	No	92.9% (z=-.2)	97.7% (z=.1)
	Total	28	43
7 – Support	Yes	28.6% (z=-.2)	32.6% (z=.2)
	No	71.4% (z=.2)	67.4% (z=-.1)
	Total	28	43
8 – Intimacy	Yes	14.3% (z=.5)	9.3% (z=-.4)
	No	85.7% (z=-.2)	90.7% (z=.1)
	Total	28	43
9 – Companionship	Yes	14.8% (z=.1)	14.0% (z=-.1)
	No	85.2% (z=.0)	86.0% (z=.0)
	Total	27	43
10 – Multiplexity	Yes	19.2% (z=.6)	11.6% (z=-.5)
	No	80.8% (z=-.3)	88.4% (z=.2)
	Total	26	43
11 – Multiplexity	Yes	26.9% (z=-.7)	39.5% (z=.6)
	No	74.1% (z=.5)	60.5% (z=-.4)
	Total	27	43
12 – Companionship/closeness	Yes	46.2% (z=1.3)	23.3% (z=-1.0)
	No	53.8% (z=-.9)	76.7% (z=.7)
	Total	26	43

Table 13.

*Chi-Square Tests for level of interaction*

	X <sup>2</sup>	d.f.	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Φ
<b>1 – Positive Relationship</b>	<b>4.380</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.036</b>	<b>-.245</b>
<b>2 – Negative Relationship</b>	<b>3.035</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.081</b>	<b>-.204</b>
3 – Trust	.256	1	.613	-.059
4 – Trust	.256	1	.613	-.059
5 – Support	1.340	1	.247	-.137
6 – Support	.972	1	.324	.117
7 – Support	.126	1	.723	-.042
8 – Intimacy	.421	1	.516	.077
9 – Companionship	.010	1	.920	.012
10 – Multiplexity	.756	1	.385	.105
11 – Multiplexity	1.363	1	.243	-.140
<b>12 – Companionship/closeness</b>	<b>3.912</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.048</b>	<b>.238</b>

*The ‘Big Lost Fan’!*

Signs of positive relationships among the participants started to emerge early after the discussion started (Please see Appendix F for complete documentation of Facebook group discussions). Although political discussion were clear-cut factual and opinionated,

a Palestinian participant started a discussion topic under the title “Common interests...” where she asked the participants to express what could be “points we share in life”

Hello everyone, I believe that we “youth” as much we are different, I still believe that we can have points we share in life. For example, ambitions, dreams and even music... etc

I'll mention some of my interests... and I hope you guys tell me some of yours too. Well I'm 19 I love music, writing poems in English and graphic design.

And btw [by the way] I'm a Lost [American television show] big big fan, I guess it's the best American export to the world :D

I wonder if you guys would be interested in listening to Palestinian Folklore music?

Anyways, looking forward for you[r] replies ;) (Post by a Palestinian participant in the “Common Interests...” discussion topic, April 6, 2008)

Throughout this discussion topic, twelve participants, ten of whom were Americans, were involved until the end of the discussion period in sharing their interests on a variety of topics. Several American participants shared their admiration of the American TV series “Lost” with their Palestinian counterparts. An American participant responded: “I agree it might be the best American export yet. Coca-Cola is pretty darn good, though.” The Palestinian participant comment also led to other favorable responses, where people shared their interests in music, writing, and graphic design. The prevalent theme for ‘common interests’ was entertainment and entertainment media. The Palestinian participant responded to an American’s post by saying “Well lool [laugh out

loud] I can't imagine what life would look like without TV, but I live in Gaza so no [TV] no fun!" Furthermore, participants started sharing their favorite music genres, such as country music and rock, among others. What was interesting is that nearly all the discussion was carried out between the ten American participants and one of the Palestinians, who is a female living in the Gaza Strip. The interaction became a sort of a cultural exchange platform, where points of commonality were expressed, and the fact that people have different opinions and tastes in music and culture was an added value for diversity and respect to each other's opinions.

#### *Companionship and Closeness*

With regards to the question about companionship and closeness, which asked the participants as to whether they would like to meet a member of the Facebook group, several participants answered that they wanted to meet specific members of the group, both cross- and intra-nationally, in addition, several were general in expressing that they have a desire to meet everyone from the Facebook group. An example from one of the discussion topics of the Facebook group – titled “A Thought” – a Palestinian female participant posed the question “why we should know about each other?” to have responses from two other participants, one Palestinian and one American. The Palestinian participant responded by saying: “yes as nations we have to know about the existence to each others as [long as] we live in [the] globalization era.” Another American participant emphasized the fact that there is a “dual poor representation” of Palestinians and Americans. She continues: “As I hear about the conflicts that some Palestinians are involved in, I have a desire to know more than the argument discussed at the surface.”

Another example of the development of close relationships and a sense of companionship among participants was indicated by another discussion topic, where participants discussed dating, relationships and marriage. The topic was created on April 21, 2008, roughly three weeks after the beginning of the discussions. Looking at the posts of participants, we can see inference that the participants started feeling more close to each other, especially that they were sharing intimate details about their personal lives. For example, an American participant shared with the group the fact that she has been dating her boyfriend for 7 years and that they are planning to get married within the next three years. Another participant, a Palestinian, said: "I'm single, dating is not an option for me, because it's not accepted to me or to my family and for most to my religion. But you know I hope I get married the "modern" way." By the "modern way," the participant was referring to how young males and females in the Palestinian society meet in public place, such as their workplace, and the man "tells his mom also about this girl, the mom and her gang go to family house of the girl and ask for her hands, and they get engaged the next day."

Participants also discussed the issue of religion and marriage, where they shared opinions about inter-faith marriages, and how "it's easier when both people have the same faith" (post of American participant, April 28, 2008).

#### *Negative Relationships*

The results also showed that the question on negative relationship was approaching significance ( $X^2=3.035$ ,  $p=.081$ ), as the majority of participants answered 'no' when they were asked whether there was someone in the Facebook group they did not like. Worthy of mentioning is that a higher percentage of Americans (16.3%,  $z=1.1$ ),

when compared to Palestinians (3.3%,  $z=-1.3$ ), self-reported that there were people from the Facebook group whom they did not like. There were several comments posted both on the Facebook group main wall and within the discussion topics that are thought to have generated negative attitudes toward some of the participants. The negative attitudes were both cross and intra-national.

For example, on April 9, 2008, about five days from the start of the discussion a Palestinian participant posted his opinion about the media coverage and the “American people[‘s] level of knowledge about what is happening around the world.

Hi guys,

Well, just a thought to share with you about the American Media.

It is a fact that the American media is biased, and it is a fact that the American people are ignorant to what happens elsewhere in the world, whether in Palestina/Israel, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo... etc. most of these conflicts going on in the World – and esp. in the Middle East- are American –caused and/or influenced. [...] As you can see from the news, and from movies where the American soldiers, who are OCCUPIERS are the heroes, against the OCCUPIED “freedom fighters” who appear to be the terrorist rebels. [...] The American media hides the truth from the American people, and it involves its people in a scandal of deceitfulness against the world. [...] (post by a Palestinian participant, April 9, 2008, Facebook group wall)

Such a comment resulted in some harsh responses from a number of participants, both Palestinians and Americans. An American responded: “I wouldn’t suggest starting

an argument by boldly suggesting an entire nation is ignorant. That's just being... what's the word? Besides, I looked into this whole Palestinian/Israeli conflict and I didn't find any "American influence." The Palestinian participant answered back: "I would like to clarify I did not refer to the whole nation as ignorant, its just the stereotype a person gets about another people, a stereotype by definition is hasty generalization..." and then the participant supported his argument with 'factual' information of the reasons for an 'American influence' on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, such as mentioning the extent of the U.S. financial and political support to Israel.

This interaction between the two participants also brought other participants into the discussion. An American participant argued:

So I believe that there are (or were at that time) a large number of Americans citizens who believe (believed) that the US soldiers were acting as freedom fighters and that the Iraqi government suppressing their peoples' rights could be considered as terrorist. Especially since their leader, Saddam Hussein was listed on the terrorist watch group. (yes I know the US put Saddam in power but that is a completely different discussion).

The Palestinian participant responded by stating the number of people killed in Iraq since the war had started and expressing: "... so what ever the Americans were doing in Iraq, its definitely not to spread democracy, and for peace for the Iraqi [people]... it should be mentioned here and now, the Iraq lived its [quietest], most peaceful, and biggest economic growth was during the Saddam Hussein reign." Another Palestinian participant responded to this comment by saying that one should not regard

Hussein's regime as a better situation than the current one, yet the participant also criticized what the US government is doing in Iraq: "Saddam is a monster so is the American policy maker in D.C.."

What could be derived from the previous set of comments is that sometimes differences in opinions might generate signs of negative relationships, especially when participants expressed personal opinion in a generalized sense and a stereotypical manner. The American participant considered the phrase "all American people are ignorant" offensive. The same happened when another American participant denied the influence of the US on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which was also met with sharp responses.

Despite the fact that the other nine questions resulted in insignificant results, yet by looking at the descriptive statistics of the questions, we can see some trends emerging from the answers of the participants. For example, when looking at the two questions measuring for trust, we can see that Americans (20%,  $z=.3$ ) were more likely to express that they have trusted and/or have been trusted by a member of the Facebook group, while Palestinians had a lower percentage (10%,  $z=-.4$ ). With regards to the three questions measuring support, both Palestinian (28.6%,  $z=-.2$ ) and American (32.6%,  $z=.2$ ) participants self-reported positive responses to the question "is there anyone in the Facebook group that you feel you could ask for help or a favor?" Another example is the second question of multiplexity "is there anyone from the Facebook group participants that you would like to have a discussion with about topics other than those of the Facebook group?" Palestinian and American participants had relatively high percentages (26.9%, 39.5%, respectively) with regards to their positive answers for that question.

## Psychosocial Well-Being

The second hypothesis tested whether the participants' psychosocial well-being would be positively influenced as a result of online social networking. Psychosocial well-being was measured by combining two different scales; the self-esteem scale, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). For this study, the researcher carried out repeated measures ANOVA tests for psychosocial well-being as a combined scale, as well as separately for the two sub-measures (self esteem and SWLS) separately. The researcher also computed all the items from the two scales into one variable that was set to measure the participants' psychosocial well-being.

The results showed that there was a main effect for time (pretest – posttest) on psychosocial well-being ( $F=45.533$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Participants of both the experiment and control group have shown a positive change in their psychosocial well-being when their self-report answers were compared between the pretest and the posttest (Please see Table 14). The results also showed that there was a main effect of time on the participants' satisfaction with life ( $F=8.940$ ,  $p=.003$ ) for the experiment, as well as the control group. The participants' satisfaction with life was positively influenced over time (Please see Table 15).

Table 14.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Psychosocial Well Being by research group*

	N		Mean		S.D.	
	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control
Well-Being Pretest	64	43	2.15	2.27	.486	.516
Well-Being Posttest	64	43	1.91	2.01	.568	.606

Table 14.2

*Repeated measures for Psychosocial Well Being by research group*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	45.533	<.001	.302
Group	1	1.185	.279	.011
Time x Group	1	.035	.851	.000
Error	105			

Table 15.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Satisfaction with Life Scale by Time (within-subjects) and Research Group (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control
Pretest	63	43	2.35	2.59	.839	.893
Posttest	63	43	2.21	2.37	.832	.833

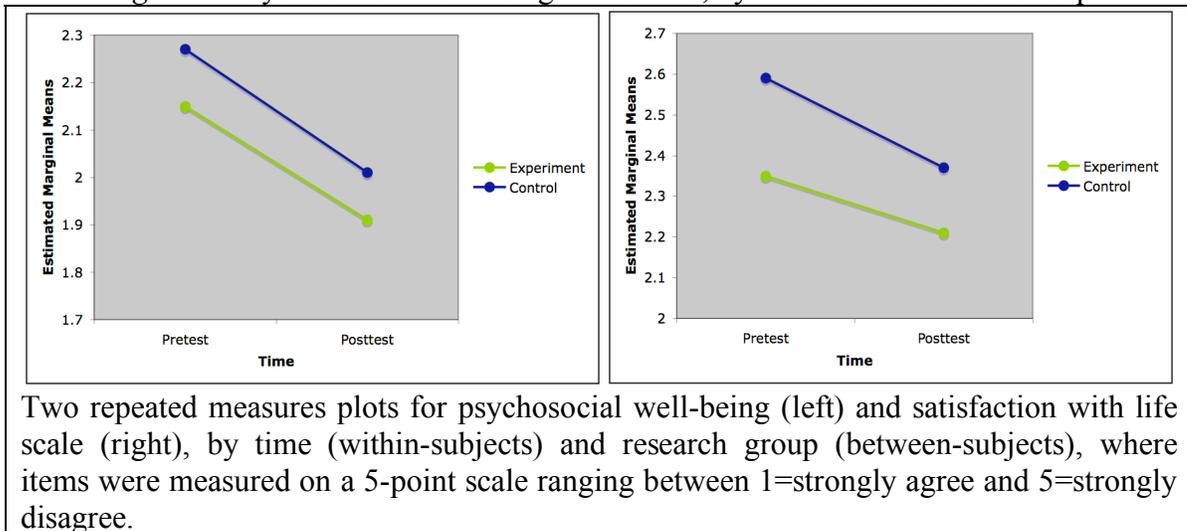
Note. <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 15.2

*Repeated measures for Satisfaction with Life Scale by Time (within-subjects) and Research Group (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	8.94	.003	.079
Group	1	1.605	.208	.015
Time x Group	1	.447	.505	.004
Error	104			

Figure 2. Psychosocial Well-Being and SWLS, by Time and Research Group



Two repeated measures plots for psychosocial well-being (left) and satisfaction with life scale (right), by time (within-subjects) and research group (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

As the study was focused on understanding how online social networking through a closed Facebook group would influence the participants' psychosocial well, the significance (or insignificance) of the experimental treatment grouping (research group) signified whether online social networking has resulted or contributed in the change and its direction. Hence, the results showed no main effect for the research group on self-esteem ( $F=.154$ ,  $p=.695$ ), satisfaction with life ( $F=1.605$ ,  $p=.208$ ), and the overall measure of psychosocial well-being ( $F=1.185$ ,  $p=.279$ ). What this means is that we are not quite sure whether online social networking through the Facebook group was the reason for the positive change of the participants' psychosocial well-being over time.

Hypothesis (H5.2) tested for the influence of nationality on the psychosocial well-being of participants. The results showed a main effect for both time ( $F=44.569$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and nationality ( $F=8.725$ ,  $p=.004$ ) on the psychosocial well-being of participants, where Palestinian and American participants showed significant positive change over time (Please see Table 16). In addition, there was a main effect for both time ( $F=8.251$ ,  $p=.005$ ) and nationality ( $F=12.276$ ,  $p=.001$ ) over the participants' satisfaction with life,

which was positively influence over time (Please see Table 17). With regards to self-esteem, the results indicated a positive influence over time with results approaching significance ( $F=3.614$ ,  $p=.060$ ).

Table 16.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Self-Esteem of American Participants by Nationality*

	N		Mean		S.D.	
	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American
Pretest	65	42	2.37	2.09	.440	.506
Posttest	65	42	2.13	1.84	.604	.544

Table 16.2

*Repeated measures for Self-Esteem of American Participants by Nationality*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	44.569	<.001	.298
Nationality	1	.8.725	.004	.077
Time x Nationality	1	.001	.974	.000
Error	63			

Table 17.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Satisfaction with Life Scale for Experiment Group by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American
Pretest	23	40	2.60	2.21	.876	.792
Posttest	23	40	2.54	2.02	.885	.749

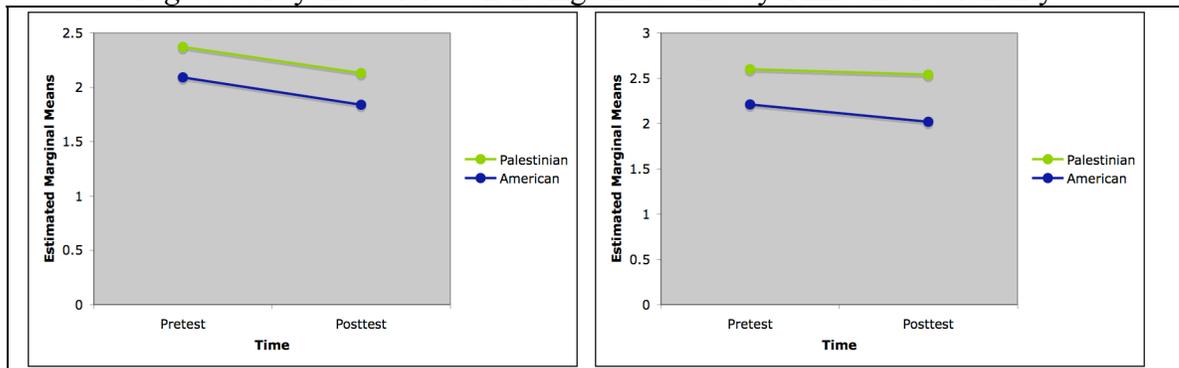
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 17.2

*Repeated measures for Satisfaction with Life Scale for Experiment Group by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	3.210	.078	.050
Nationality	1	6.035	.028	.077
Time x Nationality	1	.785	.379	.013
Error	61			

Figure 3. Psychosocial Well-Being and SWLS by Time and Nationality



Two repeated measures plots for psychosocial well-being (left) and satisfaction with life scale (right), by time (within-subjects) and nationality (between-subjects), where items were measures on a 5-point scale, ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

The experimental treatment grouping (research group) did not have a significant effect on self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and overall psychosocial well-being over time. This tells us that the positive change in the participants' psychosocial well-being

(self-esteem and satisfaction with life) is not surely a result of online social networking via Facebook, especially that there was a significant positive change of the psychosocial well-being of the participants from the experiment group (Facebook group), where time was a main effect ( $F=30.698$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The experiment group participants' satisfaction with life was positively influenced over time, with results approaching significance ( $F=3.210$ ,  $p=.078$ ), with a significant influence of nationality ( $F=6.035$ ,  $p=.028$ ).

By looking at these results, we can infer that the psychosocial well-being of participants (combined measure), and the separate measure for the satisfaction with life, were influenced over time, yet due to the fact that the research group was insignificant in its influence over time, we are not sure that the change is due to the participation and interaction through the Facebook group. Hence, the second hypothesis was supported.

*“\*Sigh\*”*

Reflecting on these results from the content of the Facebook group discussions, there was one discussion topic, titled “What do Americans know about Gaza strip?” where a Palestinian participants asked her counterparts about the type of information they have about the Gaza Strip. An American participant answered her questions: “as far as the media coverage of the Gaza strip in America, we tend to hear about it only in relation to violence.” The participants ended his comment by asking a question to the Palestinian participants about “what exactly is going on in Gaza?” The Palestinian female participant responded: *“\*Sigh\* where to start talking about Gaza? If you watch Lost, you’ll find resemblance between Gaza and The Island,”* and continued in explaining how the siege and the conflict influence her daily life and lives of her peers. The participant here showed signs of sadness about her living situations, and even more sadness that the

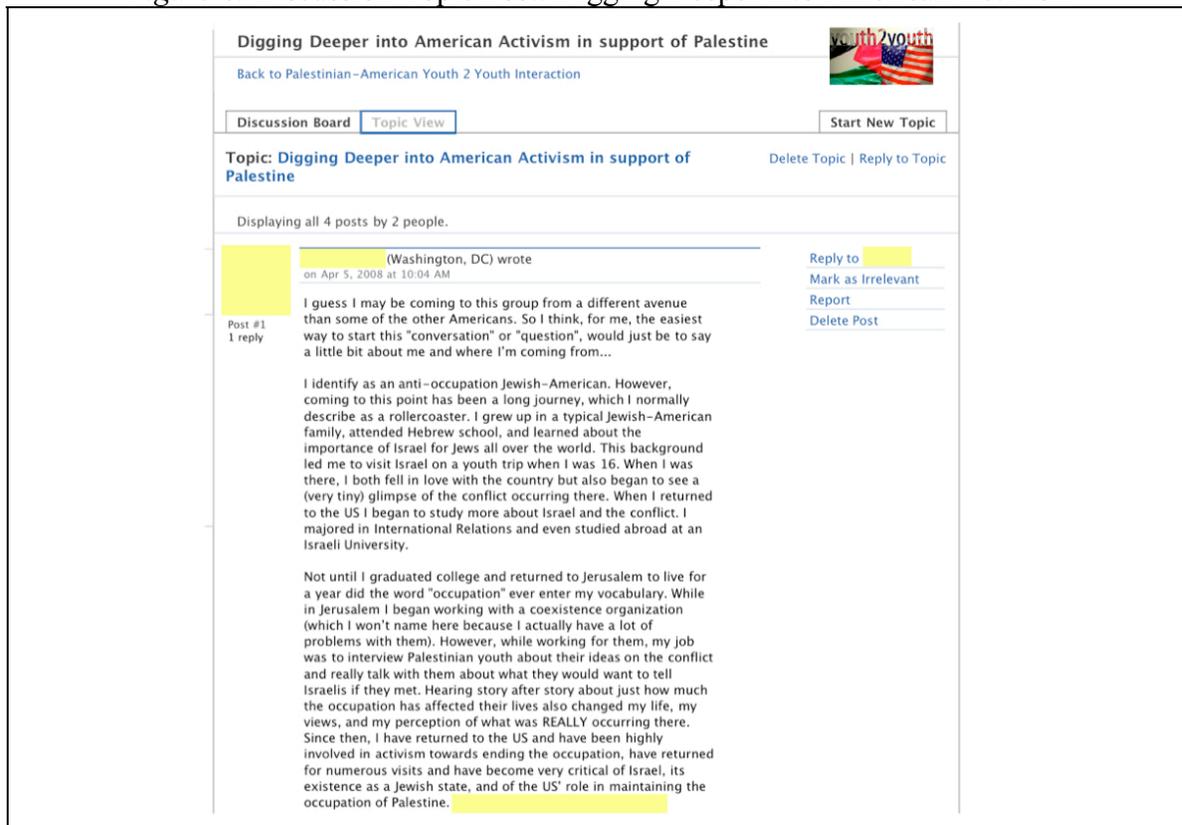
‘world doesn’t know’ about her suffering. Another participants from Gaza explained the situation by posting a comment on the Facebook group wall:

Hi to all, I have posted a photo of my car after being converted from Gazoline into cooking Gas due to the siege imposed on Gaza by the Israeli side, and now I can’t even use the Gas, because the Gas also was banned by the Israeli authorities!!! [...] If anyone say[s] that this siege [is] because of HAMAS radical movement, I will answer: the only victims of such [a] siege is the [average] citizens living in Gaza, and HAMAS leaders do not even feel [the consequences] of the siege, where every thing is offered for them, and personally I believe that we “GAZANS” were taken hostage by HAMAS, so we shouldn’t be punished by the world in addition. (Comment posted by Palestinian participant, April 15, 2008).

In another discussion topic titled “who influences Palestinian opinion,” some of the comments of Palestinians showed indicators or symptoms of low satisfaction with life and psychosocial well-being. A Palestinian female participant posted on April 5, 2008: “we as Palestinians, do live in a different situation that controls our life and directs it unconsciously toward many directions that might be against or with the Americans.” On a different level, one of the American participants shared her personal experience with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The participant expressed her feelings towards the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory by saying: “hearing story after story about just how much the occupation has affected their lives also changed my life, my views, and my perception of what was REALLY occurring there.”

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Figure 4. Discussion Topic Post: Digging Deeper into American Activism



Post by an American participants from the Facebook group on the discussion topic “Digging Deeper into American Activism in support of Palestine,” posted on April 5, 2008 at 10.04 a.m.

## Social Capital

The measure for social capital was formulated through combining three separate measures that were developed by Ellison al. (2007) based on Putnam’s conceptualization of social capital. The three sub-measures for social capital were: bridging social capital, bonding social capital, and maintained social capital. The third research hypothesis dealt with measuring the influence of online social networking over social capital and its three sub-measures. The measure was analyzed as a whole, as well as the sub-measures for social capital, by computing separate variables for each of them. The results showed that

time (pretest-posttest) had a significant positive influence on the overall social capital measure ( $F=4.187$ ,  $p=.043$ ), yet with no significant main effect for research group ( $F=.753$ ,  $p=.388$ ) (Please see Table 18 & Figure 5).

Table 18.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Social Capital by Time (within-subjects) and Research Group (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control
Pretest	62	42	2.15	2.03	.510	.534
Posttest	62	42	2.04	1.99	.583	.510

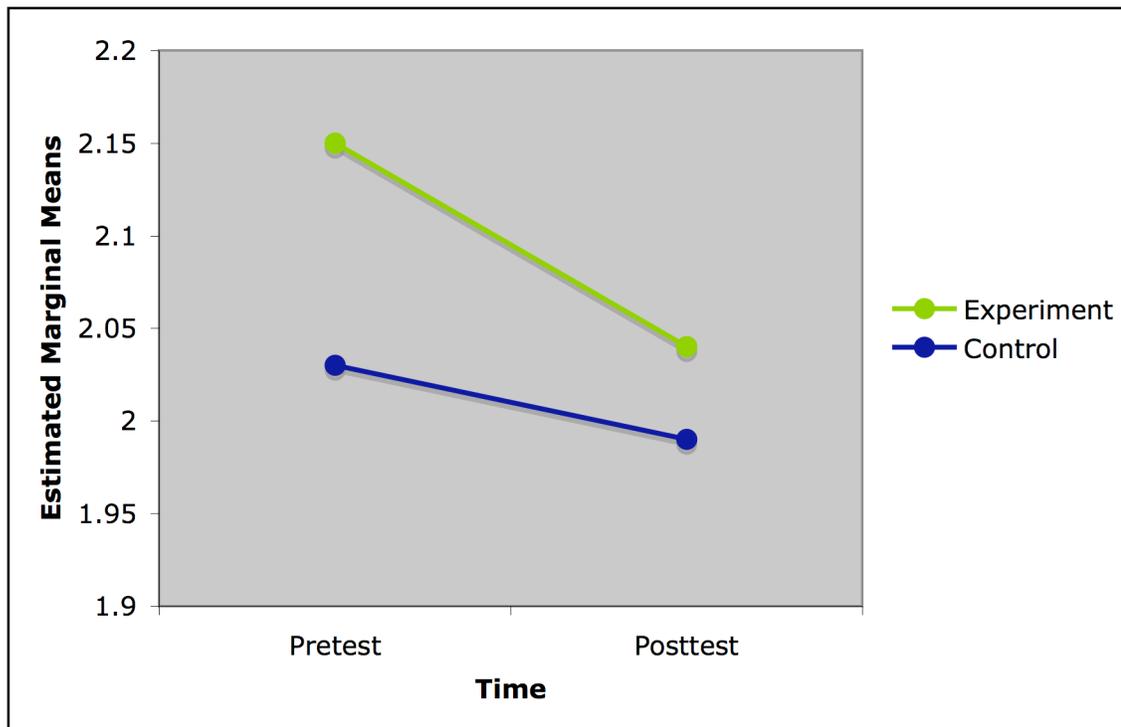
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 18.2

*Repeated measures for Social Capital by Time (within-subjects) and Research Group (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	4.187	.043	.039
Group	1	.753	.388	.007
Time x Group	1	.653	.421	.006
Error	102			

Figure 5. Social Capital by Time and Research Group



Repeated measures plot for overall social capital, by time (within-subjects) and research group (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

The researcher, as mentioned above, computed separate variables for the sub-measures of social capital. As for bridging social capital, it was not significantly influenced by time ( $F=.001$ ,  $p=.976$ ), nor by research group ( $F=1.453$ ,  $p=.231$ ). Similarly, time did not significantly influence bonding social capital ( $F=.012$ ,  $p=.911$ ), as well as research group, which had no main effect on bonding social capital ( $F=.034$ ,  $p=.855$ ). Maintained social capital was neither significantly influenced by time, nor by research group.

Hypothesis (H5.3) dealt with investigating the influence of nationality over the participants' social capital. The participants' overall social capital was positively influenced by both time ( $F=5.858$ ,  $p=.017$ ) and nationality ( $F=11.101$ ,  $p=.001$ ), where the

results showed that both Palestinian and American participants were positively influenced over time (Please see Table 19). Furthermore, nationality had a main effect on bridging social capital ( $F=12.119$ ,  $p=.001$ ) and maintained social capital ( $F=8.881$ ,  $p=.004$ ), in addition to results approaching significance with regards to bonding social capital ( $F=3.811$ ,  $p=.054$ ). What these numbers give us is an indication that Palestinian and American participants differed in terms of their bridging, bonding and maintained social capital.

Table 19.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Social Capital by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American
Pretest	64	40	2.33	1.97	.496	.489
Posttest	64	40	2.19	1.91	.563	.521

Note. <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 19.2

*Repeated measures for Social Capital by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	5.858	.017	.054
Nationality	1	11.101	.001	.098
Time x Nationality	1	1.023	.314	.010
Error	102			

When analyzing the results of the experiment group separately, it was shown that there was a main effect for both time ( $F=5.116$ ,  $p=.027$ ) and nationality ( $F=5.157$ ,  $p=.002$ ) on the overall social capital measure, where both Palestinian and American participants were positively influenced in terms of their social capital over time (Please see Table 20 & Figure 6). The nationality of the experiment group participants had a

main effect on bridging social capital ( $F=11.417$ ,  $p=.001$ ), bonding social capital ( $F=4.821$ ,  $p=.032$ ), and maintained social capital ( $F=7.139$ ,  $p=.010$ ). What this means is that Palestinian and American participants of the experiment group differed in terms of their bridging, bonding and maintained social capital.

Table 20.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Social Capital of Experiment Group by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American
Pretest	22	40	2.41	2.00	.483	.472
Posttest	22	40	2.34	1.88	.607	.508

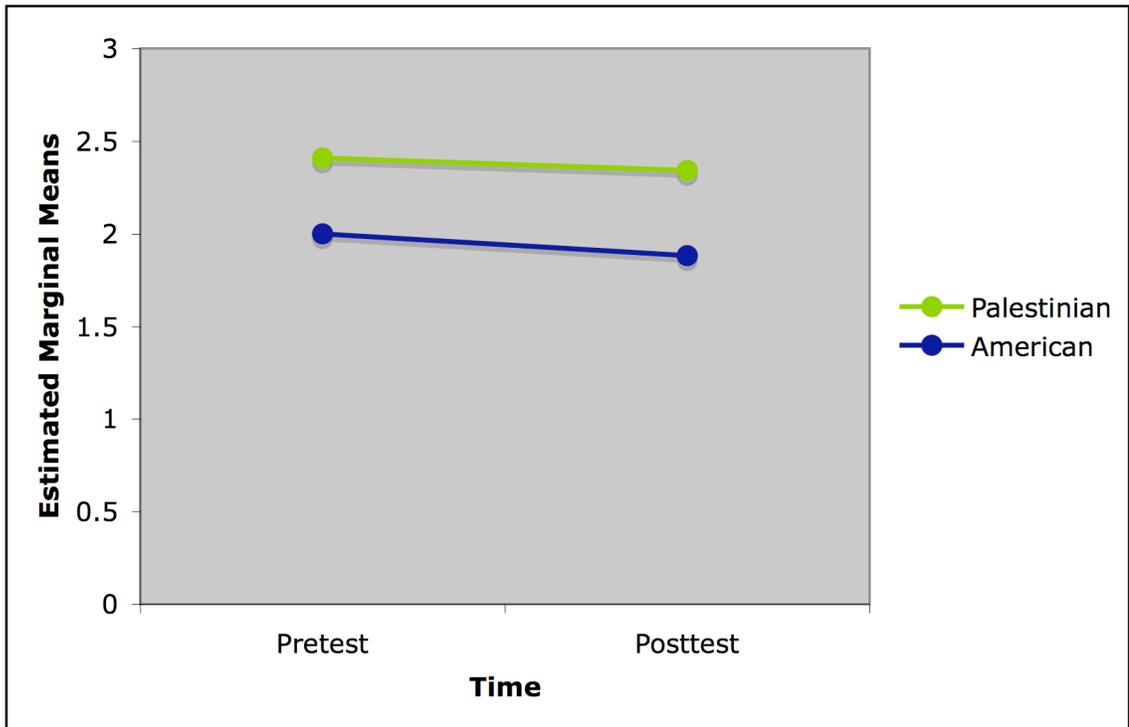
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 20.2

*Repeated measures for Social Capital of Experiment Group by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	5.116	.027	.079
Nationality	1	5.157	.002	.155
Time x Nationality	1	.349	.557	.006
Error	102			

Figure 6: Overall Social Capital of Experiment Group by Time and Nationality



Repeated measures plot for overall social capital, by time (within-subjects) and nationality (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

By looking at the previous results, we can infer that the third research hypothesis, which tested for the influence of online social networking on the participants' social capital, was statistically supported. However, due to the fact that research group, which is the group division amongst the participants of the study according to whether or not they were exposed to the experimental treatment (Facebook group), makes us not very sure that the change in the participants' social capital was due to online social networking, as the results suggested that participants from the experiment group, who were exposed to the experimental treatment, did self-report a change in their social capital over the two periods of testing (pretest and posted).

*“Noticing the Little Things...”*

Throughout the Facebook group interaction, there were many indicators for how the participants perceived their social capital, especially with regards to their relationship with others in their communities and their role in the society. One of the discussion topics was titled “Noticing the little things ...” through which participants expressed how different they are from each other in relation to social norms and personal characteristics. Several American participants expressed how they think that a main difference between Americans and other national groups is the ‘demand for personal space and individualism.’ An American asked his peers: “do we really need more personal space? It’s certainly reflected in the layout of our country.” Another American participant responded: “I think we are much more individualistic than many cultures, and that we place much more emphasis on personal space [...] Living in a college dorm for a few years was certainly a refreshing break from caring so much about personal space,” yet, the participant notified that as soon these years are over, people tend to “go back to wanting their space. A lot.”

A Palestinian participant responded by describing how close-knit the Palestinian community is, she says: “neighbors are sooooo close to each others, that sometimes I hear that they borrow clothes from each others.” An American participant commented on the need for personal space: “It seems like American are increasingly distrustful and afraid that other people are dangerous, and that’s why we always keep to ourselves.” Another American responded to the previous comment: “I for one feel like I keep to myself partly because my neighbors are idiots who play bad rap music at all hours, but also because I’m so busy that when I actually am home, I just want to chill out by myself.”

### *Offline versus Online Social Capital*

The participants in the study were requested to self-report their bridging, bonding, and maintained social capital in both the pretest and posttest. However, the researcher added a modified measure for social capital in the pretest of the experiment group, who were exposed to the experimental treatment (Facebook interaction), which granted the researcher the opportunity to investigate the offline vs. online social capital. The data was analyzed only for the participants of the experiment group only, since those who took part in the control group were not asked about the Facebook social capital. All results for bridging, bonding, maintained and overall social capital were highly significant, resulting in the understanding that there was a major difference between the way participants perceived their offline versus online social capital.

As for bridging social capital, both the nature of social capital ( $F=9.545$ ,  $p<.001$ ), nationality ( $F=8.390$ ,  $p=.005$ ), and the interaction between social capital and nationality ( $F=3.481$ ,  $p=.042$ ) had a main effect on bridging social capital. It is prevalent from the analysis that both national groups participating in the experiment group perceived online bridging social capital in a lesser sense than offline social capital. Palestinians answers for bridging social capital varied when compared between the pretest (2.37, S.D.=.777), the posttest (2.44, S.D.=.831), and the Facebook (2.57, S.D.=.516), consequently, the Americans answers also varied when compared between the pretest (1.92, S.D.=.516), the posttest (1.85, S.D.=.552), and the Facebook specific social capital (2.35, S.D.=.516). Both national groups are observed to perceive offline bridging social capital in a much more positive way than online bridging social capital, bearing in mind the scale used ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Please see Table 21 & *Figure 7*).

Table 21.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Bridging Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American
Pretest (offline)	40	21	2.37	1.92	.777	.516
Posttest (offline)	40	21	2.44	1.85	.831	.552
Posttest (online)	40	21	2.57	2.35	.516	.604

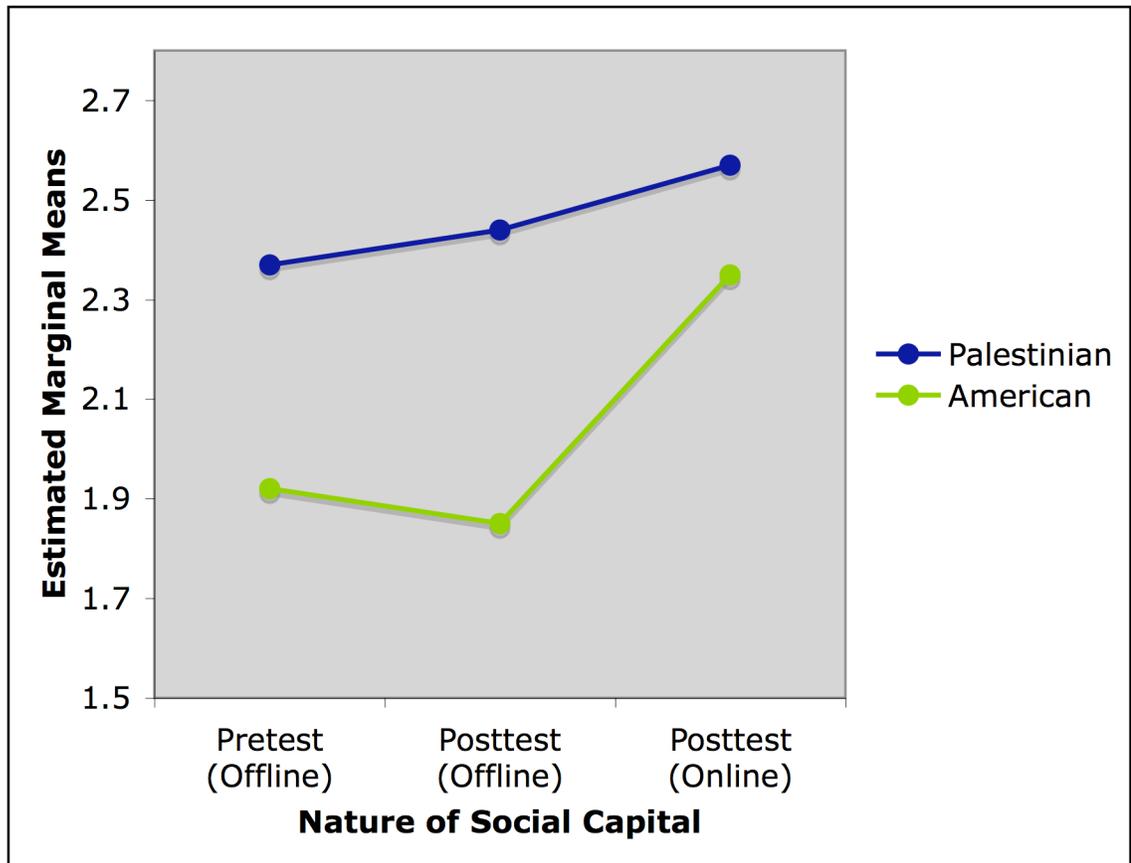
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 21.2

*Repeated measures for Bridging Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Social Capital	2	13.476	<.001	.186
Nationality	1	8.390	.005	.124
SC x Nationality	2	3.481	.042	.056
Error	59			

Figure 7: Bridging Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital and Nationality



Repeated measures plot for bridging social capital of Experiment Group, by nature of social capital (within-subjects) and nationality (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

Bonding social capital was also significantly influenced by the nature of the measure (offline vs. online) with respect to social capital ( $F=58.320$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and the interaction between the nature of social capital and nationality ( $F=3.737$ ,  $p=.030$ ). Nationality had no a main effect on offline-online bonding social capital. Palestinian and American participants of the experiment research group perceived offline bonding social capital more positively than online bonding social capital.

Table 22.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Bonding Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American
Pretest (offline)	40	20	2.23	1.98	.419	.720
Posttest (offline)	40	20	2.27	1.91	.542	.583
Posttest (online)	40	20	3.30	3.66	.822	.750

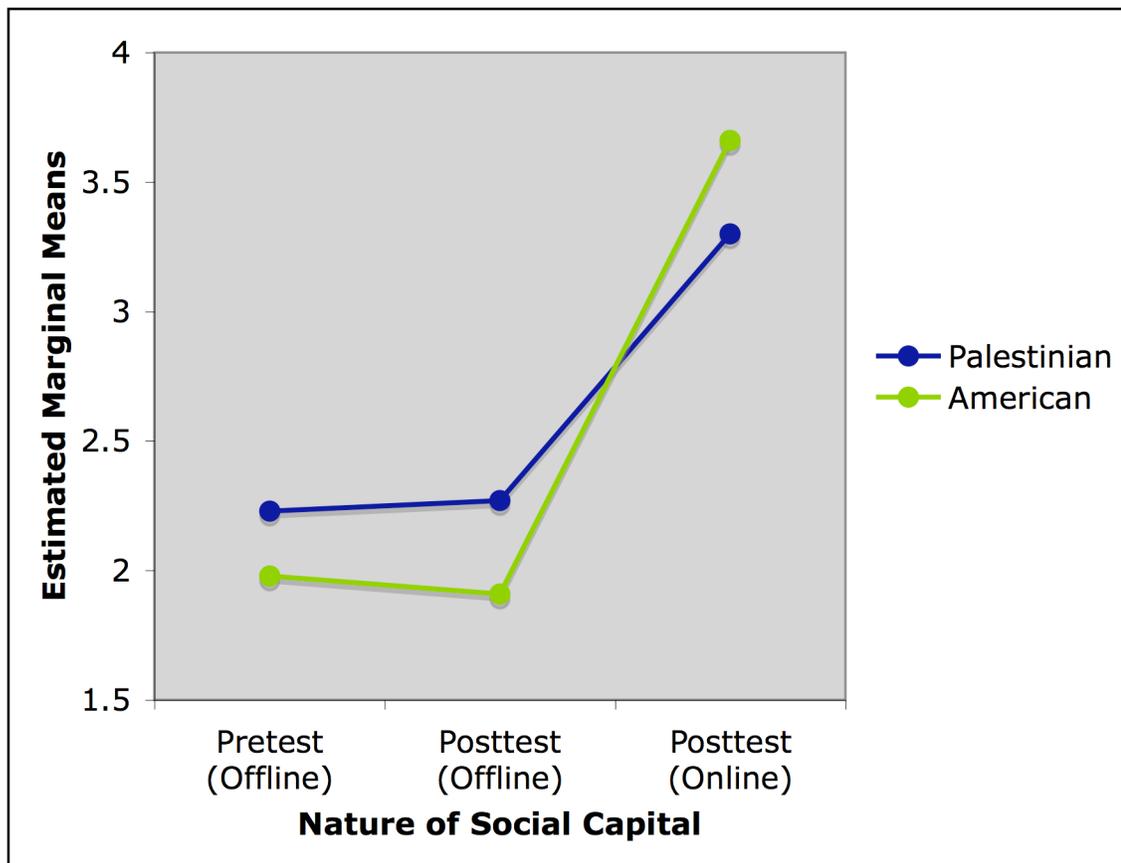
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 22.2

*Repeated measures for Bonding Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Social Capital	2	99.169	<.001	.631
Nationality	1	.440	.510	.008
SC x Nationality	2	5.756	.004	.090
Error	57			

Figure 8. Bonding Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital and Nationality



Repeated measures plot for bonding social, by nature of social capital (within-subjects) and nationality (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

Similarly, maintained social capital varied according to the offline and online nature, where the nature of social capital had a significant main effect on social capital ( $F=20.299$ ,  $p<.001$ ), as well as the interaction between the nature and nationality ( $F=6.395$ ,  $p=.003$ ), with no significant influence for nationality ( $F=.963$ ,  $p=.331$ ) (Please See Table 23, & Figure 9).

Table 23.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Maintained Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American
Pretest (offline)	40	21	2.32	1.88	.426	.573
Posttest (offline)	40	21	2.21	1.92	.691	.563
Posttest (online)	40	21	2.59	2.92	.602	.847

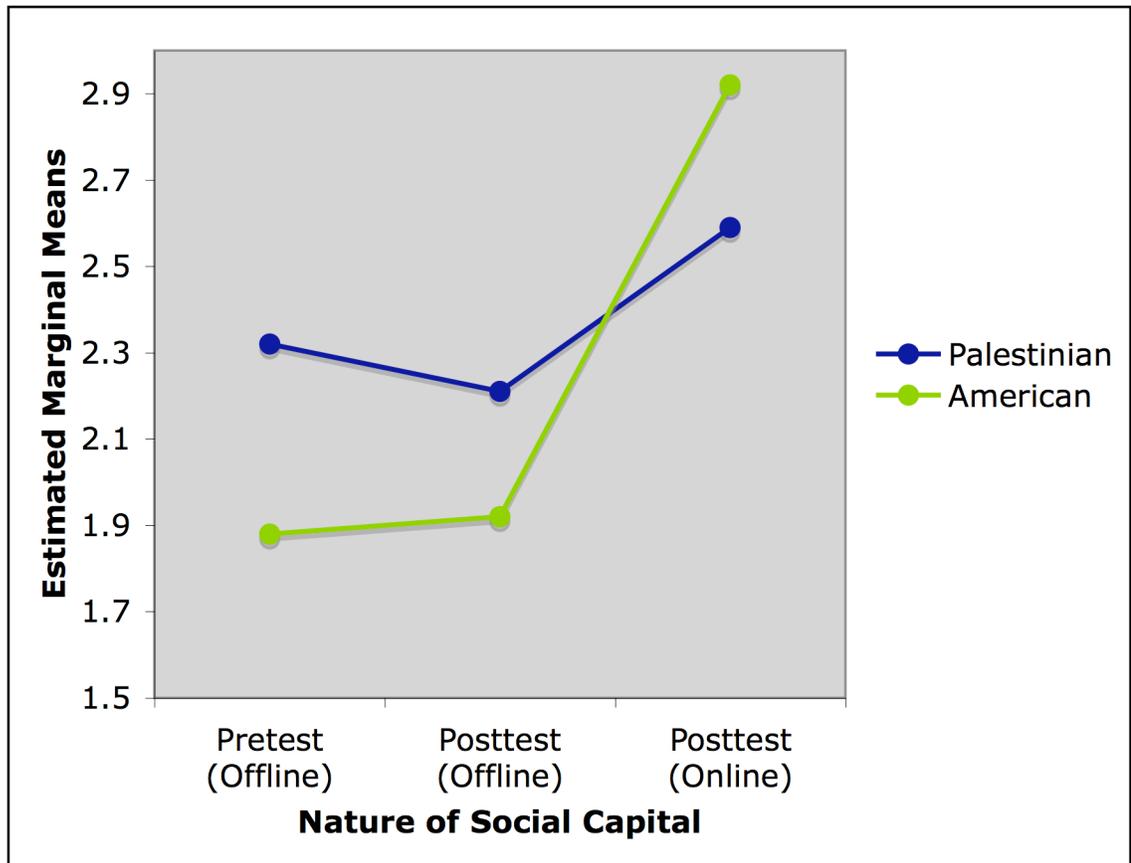
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 23.2

*Repeated measures for for Maintained Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Social Capital	2	33.581	<.001	.363
Nationality	1	.963	.331	.016
SC x Nationality	2	9.092	.001	.134
Error	58			

Figure 9. Maintained Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital and Nationality



Repeated measures plot for maintained social capital, by nature of social capital (within-subjects) and nationality (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

Finally, overall social capital was perceived differently by participants, when they were asked as to whether they agree with the scale items for the offline versus the online social capital. The nature of social capital significantly influenced the way participants perceived their social capital ( $F=42.109$ ,  $p<.001$ ), as well as the interaction between the nature and nationality ( $F=6.131$ ,  $p=.004$ ), along with nationality approaching significance ( $F=3.912$ ,  $p=.053$ ) (Please see Table 24 & Figure 10).

Table 24.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Overall Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American
Pretest (offline)	40	21	2.37	2.01	.461	.472
Posttest (offline)	40	21	2.33	1.88	.621	.508
Posttest (online)	40	21	2.76	2.84	.525	.607

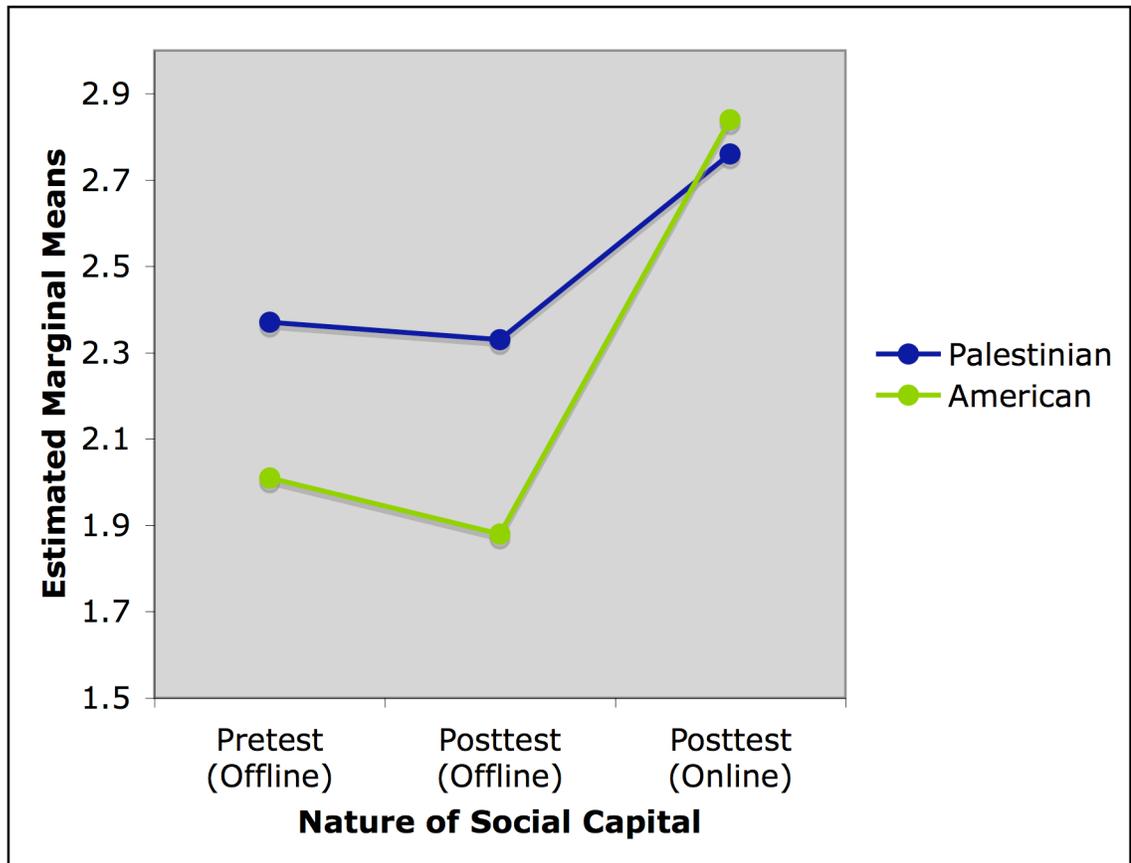
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 24.2

*Repeated measures for Overall Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Social Capital	2	64.784	<.001	.523
Nationality	1	3.912	.053	.062
SC x Nationality	2	9.225	.001	.135
Error	58			

Figure 10. Overall Social Capital of Experiment Group by Nature of Social Capital and Nationality



Repeated measures plot for offline overall social capital by nature of social capital (within-subjects) and nationality (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

The findings suggested that the influence of online social networking on social capital is that interacting with their counterparts from a different country can influence the way American and Palestinian participants perceived their social capital, in relation to how they feel towards their community and their role in it (offline social capital). However, due to the fact that research group was not significant, we cannot be very sure that the positive change was due to the online interaction. Hence, the third hypothesis is statistically supported. However, this high social capital was not translated when it was

measured with regards to the online community itself, which was formed as a result of online social networking through the closed Facebook group. Hence, the results suggest that the participants of the study perceived higher positive attitude towards their role in the 'offline' community, when compared with their 'online' social capital.

### Images and Stereotype

The fourth research hypothesis deals with the perceived image and stereotype that American and Palestinian participants have of each other. The results showed that the hypothesis was significantly supported. The researcher split the 18-item scale into two, depending on whether the statements were related to negative or positive images and stereotypes. The first scale, negative images and stereotypes, was computed with the first six variables of the overall scale. The combined items asked participants to express whether they agreed or disagreed (1=strongly agree – 5=strongly disagree) that members of the opposite national group were terrorists, violent, do not respect women, have different views of life when compared to them, and are all alike. Another variable was also included in the negative images and stereotype factor, comprised of a question that asked Americans whether they think “the goal of Palestinians is to wipe out Israel,” and the Palestinians whether they think “the goal of Americans is to wipe out Iraq.” On the other hand, another factor was computed by combining 10 other variables from the scale, which were thought to be positive, such as, innocent, peaceful, value life, generous, and religious, as well as whether the participants would trust, ask for a favor from, can be friends with, can discuss topics with, and would like to meet a member of the opposite national group. Two variables from the original scale were excluded, since their direction

was either not parallel with regards to the two national groups, or more factual rather than attitudinal.

The results showed a significant change with regards to the overall images perceived by Palestinian and American participants with a main effect for research group ( $F=5.408$ ,  $p=.022$ ), in addition to influences approaching significance for time ( $F=3.228$ ,  $p=.075$ ) and the interaction between time and research group ( $F=3.196$ ,  $p=.077$ ). It is shown that participants of the experiment group changed over time as their mean for the overall image was (2.39, S.D.=.411) in the pretest, as it dropped down to (2.26, S.D.=.394) in the posttest, meaning that there was a positive influence in the images perceived of each other, due to the fact that the measurement scale was rated between (1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree). This suggests that there was a positive change in the overall images held by the participants of the experiment group, while, no change was observed for participants of the control group (Please see Table 25, & Figure 11).

Table 25.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Overall Image by Time (within-subjects) and Research Group (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control
Pretest	61	40	2.39	2.55	.411	.661
Posttest	61	40	2.26	2.55	.394	.597

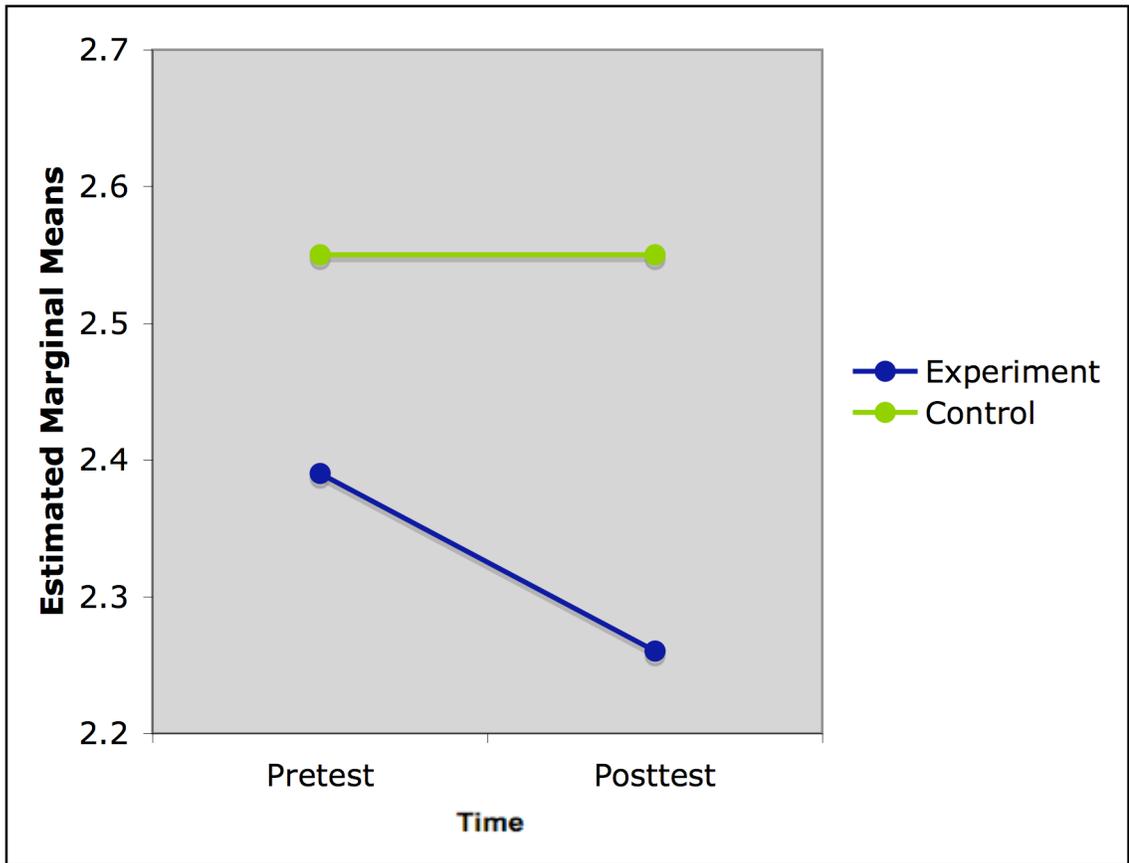
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 25.2

*Repeated measures for Overall Image by Time (within-subjects) and Research Group (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	3.228	.075	.032
Group	1	5.408	.022	.052
Time x Group	1	3.196	.077	.031
Error	99			

Figure 11. Overall Image by Time and Research Group



Repeated measures plot for overall image, by time (within-subjects) and research group (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

As mentioned earlier, items that entailed positive associations were computed into a new variable called “positive image.” The result showed that positive images were significantly influenced by time ( $F=4.480$ ,  $p=.037$ ), research group ( $F=5.220$ ,  $p=.024$ ), and the interaction between time and research group ( $F=4.513$ ,  $p=.036$ ). As shown in (Table 26), participants of the experiment group were positively influenced over time, while the control group participants were not, which suggests that this positive change for

the experiment group participants was due to online social networking via the Facebook group (Please see Figure 12).

Table 26.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Positive Image by Time (within-subjects) and Research Group (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control
Pretest	61	40	2.35	2.49	.394	.625
Posttest	61	40	2.19	2.49	.444	.608

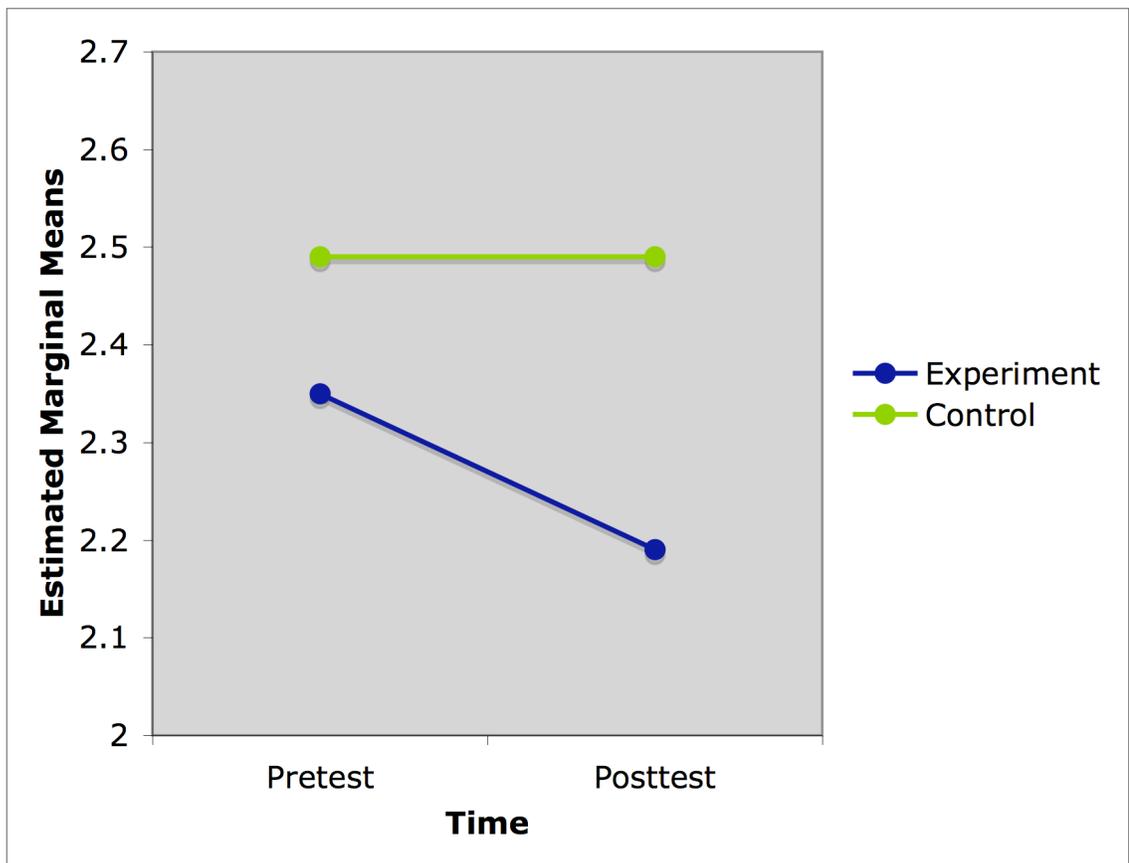
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 26.2

*Repeated measures for Positive Image by Time (within-subjects) and Research Group (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	4.480	.037	.043
Group	1	5.220	.024	.050
Time x Group	1	4.513	.036	.044
Error	99			

Figure 12. Positive Image by Time and Research Group



Repeated measures plot for positive image, by time (within-subjects) and research group (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

The items that entailed negative associations were computed into the “negative image” variable. The results showed that the influence of the research group on negative image approached significance ( $F=3.235$ ,  $p=.075$ ), yet with no main effect for time ( $F=.491$ ,  $p=.485$ ), nor for the interaction between time and group ( $F=.511$ ,  $p=.476$ ). By looking at the results we can see there was a slight positive change within the experiment group with regards to the negative image, yet no change at all for the control group (Please see Table 27). This is also illustrated in the repeated measures plot, which shows

that the experiment group members showed positive change for the negative images. It is worthy of mentioning that the items for the negative image variables were reversed to make sure they are on the same direction with the positive one, as they were computed into the “overall image” variable, as shown above. Having said that a decrease in the means for the pretest and posttest of the negative image, shows more agreement to reversed negative images, which indicates an improvement in the experiment group towards more disagreement of the negative association of each other, hence, more positive attitudes (Please see Figure 13).

Table 27.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Negative Image by Time (within-subjects) and Research Group (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control	Experiment	Control
Pretest	61	40	2.45	2.64	.592	.837
Posttest	61	40	2.36	2.64	.618	.770

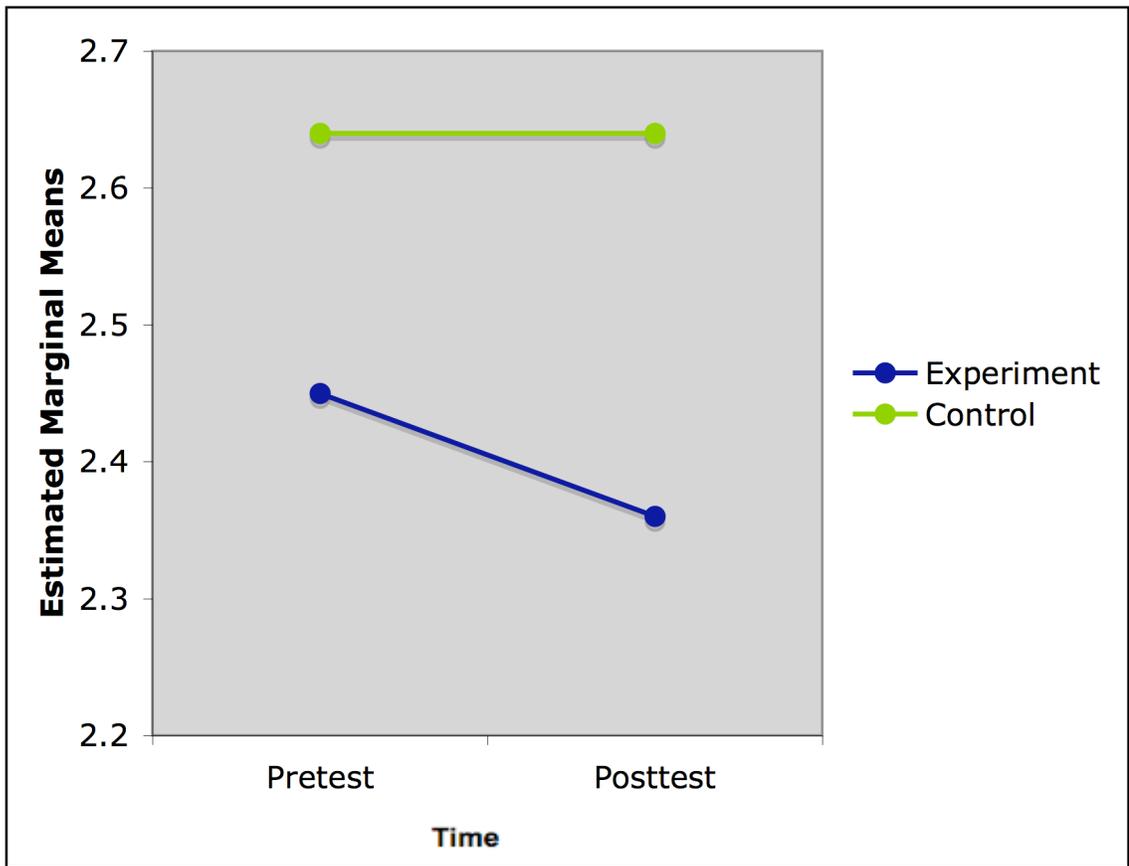
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 27.2

*Repeated measures for Negative Image by Time (within-subjects) and Research Group (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	.491	.485	.005
Group	1	3.235	.075	.032
Time x Group	1	.511	.476	.005
Error	99			

Figure 13. Negative Image by Time and Research Group



Repeated measures plot for negative image, by time (within-subjects) and research group (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

The results suggested that there is a positive change of the overall images perceived by the participants of the experiment group. They also illustrated a positive change with regards to the positive image, which suggested that the positive associations and attitudes perceived by the experiment group members have been enhanced as a result of online social networking through the Facebook group. Furthermore, there was also a slight improvement with regards to the negative images and stereotypes perceived by the experiment group members, which also suggests that the Facebook group interaction

contributed to the partial elimination or improvement with regards to negative images and stereotypes. We can infer from here that the fourth hypothesis is significantly supported.

The results showed a main effect for research group on the overall image, negative image and positive image (approaching significance), illustrating positive change within the experiment group participants, while having little or no change amongst the participants of the control group. Having said this, the sixth hypothesis predicted that nationality would have an influence over the participants as a result of online social networking with regards to the images and stereotypes perceived by the participants. For this purpose, the results of the images and stereotypes are analyzed for the participant of the experiment group only with reference to nationality as the independent variable, especially that there was no change within the control group. Having said this, we can infer that the fourth research hypothesis was supported.

The results showed a significant positive change in the images and stereotypes perceived by the participants of the experiment group. Both time ( $F=8.889$ ,  $p=.004$ ) and nationality ( $F=17.985$ ,  $p<.001$ ) had a main effect on overall image (Please see Table 28). It is shown that both Palestinians and Americans have self-reported positive change in their images and stereotypes about each other over the two testing periods of the study (pretest and posttest), yet with higher change for the American participants (Please see *Figure 14*).

Table 28.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Overall Image (Experiment Group) by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American
Pretest	21	40	2.60	2.27	.347	.399
Posttest	21	40	2.54	2.11	.345	.336

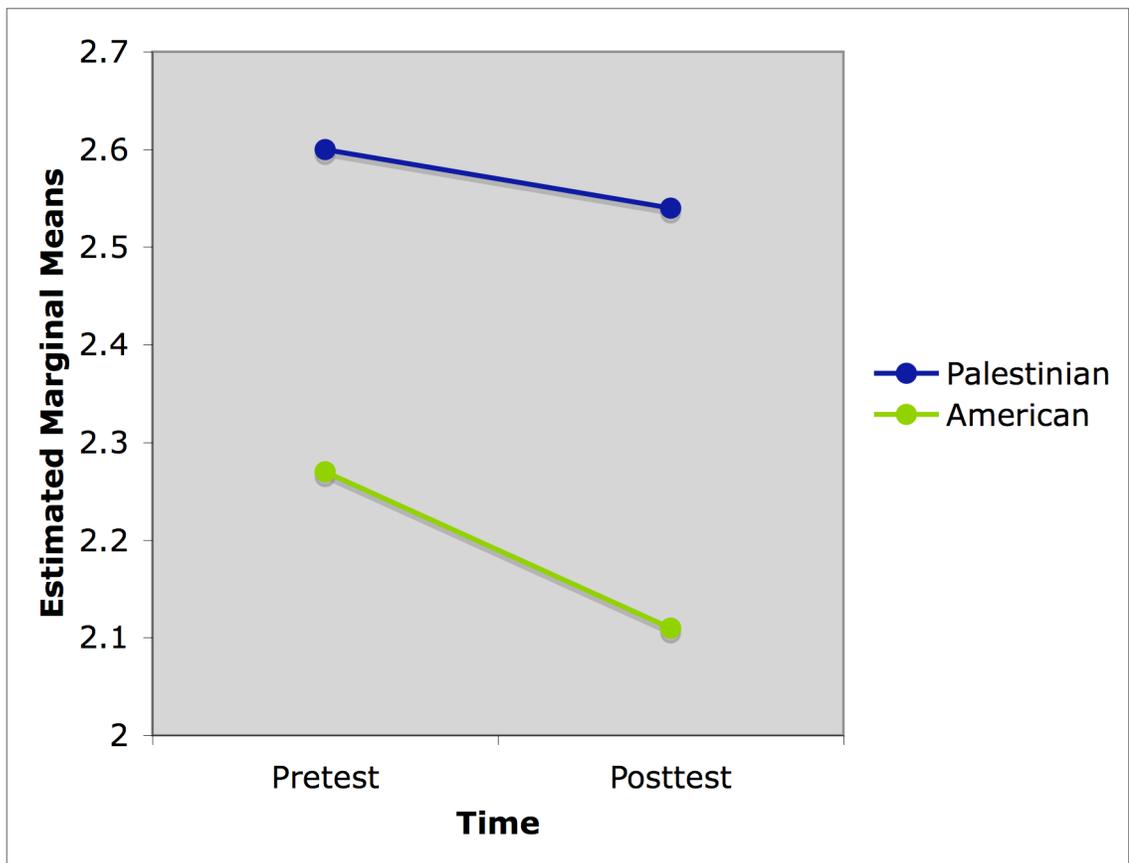
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 28.2

*Repeated measures for Overall Image (Experiment Group) by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	8.889	.004	.131
Nationality	1	17.985	<.001	.234
Time x Nationality	1	1.795	.186	.030
Error	59			

Figure 14. Overall Image (Experiment Group) by Time and Nationality



Repeated measures plot for overall image, by time (within-subjects) and nationality (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

Positive image was also significantly influenced over time and in a positive way for the participants of the experiment group, in addition to having a significant main effect for nationality. The results showed that there is a main effect for time ( $F=14.21$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and nationality ( $F=12.120$ ,  $p=.001$ ) on positive image (Please see Table 29). This illustrated that there was, also, an enhancement of the positive images and stereotypes perceived by Palestinian and American participants about each other as a result of online social networking through the Facebook group (Please see *Figure 15*).

Table 29.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Positive Image (Experiment Group) by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American
Pretest	21	40	2.55	2.24	.346	.378
Posttest	21	40	2.44	2.07	.460	.383

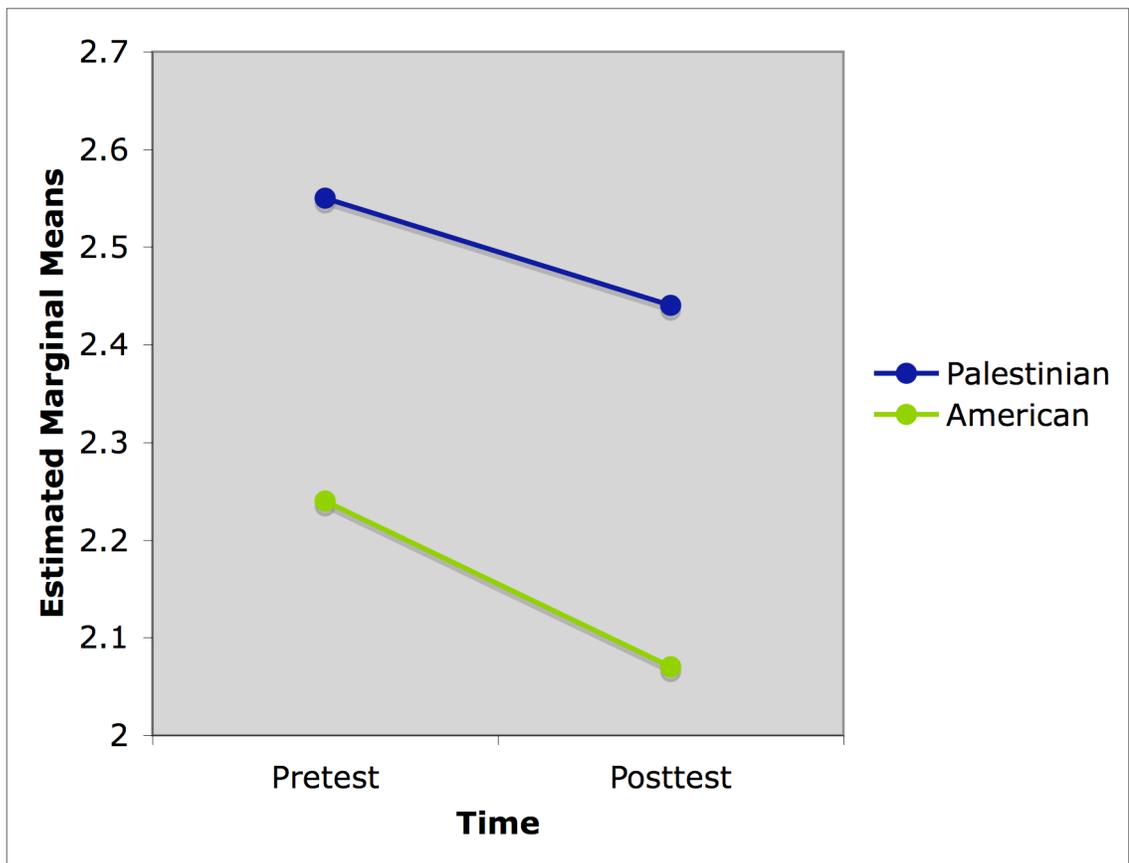
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 29.2

*Repeated measures for Positive Image (Experiment Group) by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	14.21	<.001	.194
Nationality	1	12.120	.001	.170
Time x Nationality	1	.561	.457	.009
Error	59			

Figure 15. Positive Image (Experiment Group) by Time and Nationality



Repeated measures plot for positive image, by time (within-subjects) and nationality (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

Finally, negative image was also influenced by the nationality of the experiment group participants. The results show that there is a main effect for nationality over negative image ( $F=11.463$ ,  $p=.001$ ), while time ( $F=.513$ ,  $p=.477$ ) and the interaction between time and nationality ( $F=1.292$ ,  $p=.260$ ) were not significant. What this means is that there was a difference between how Palestinians and Americans' negative images and stereotypes were influenced over time, and through online social networking via the Facebook group. As Americans were positively influenced, Palestinians self-reported a

slight draw back, meaning an enhancement of negative images. As illustrated in (Table 30.1), American participants were more prone to being positive influenced with regards to negative image, when compared to their Palestinian counterparts (Please see *Figure 16*). Therefore, we can infer that the sixth hypothesis was supported.

Table 30.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Negative Image (Experiment Group) by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	N		Mean <sup>a</sup>		S.D.	
	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American	Palestinian	American
Pretest	21	40	2.69	2.33	.553	.579
Posttest	21	40	2.72	2.19	.392	.639

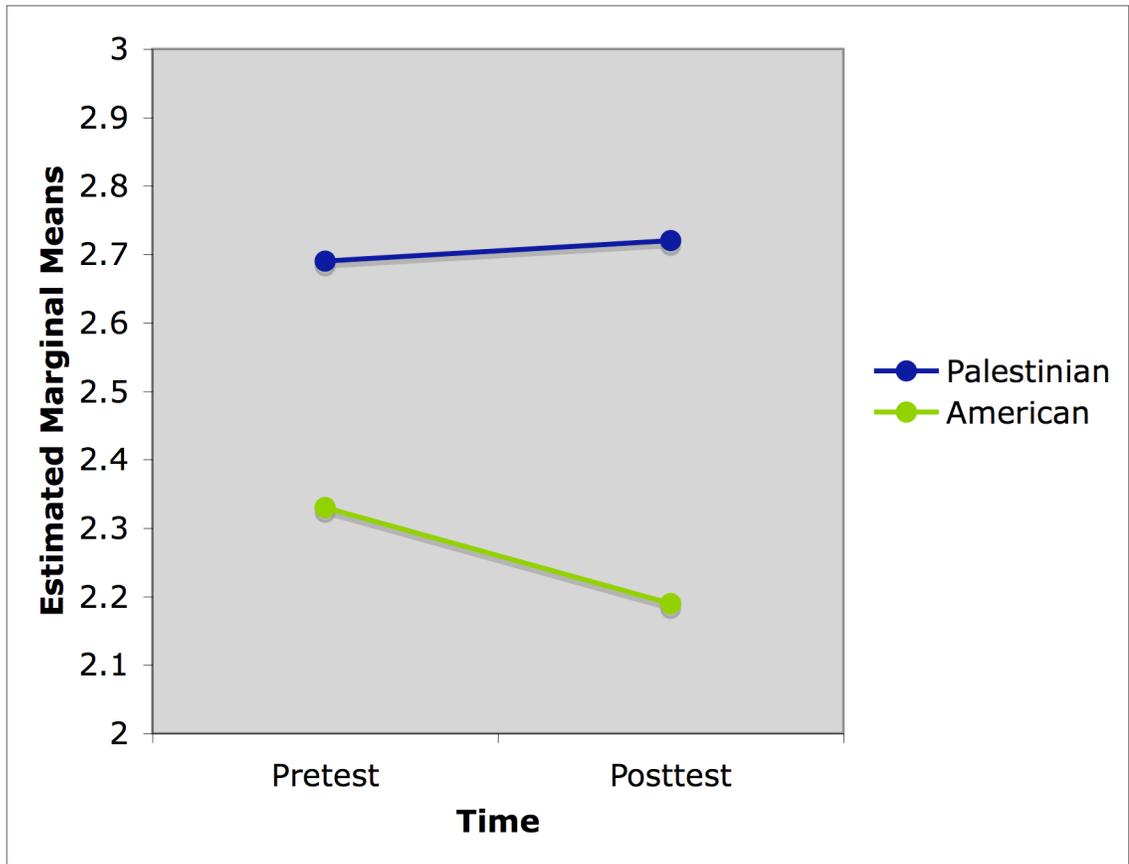
*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Scales items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree

Table 30.2

*Repeated measures for Negative Image (Experiment Group) by Time (within-subjects) and Nationality (between-subjects)*

	DF	F	p	Eta-Square
Time	1	.513	.477	.009
Nationality	1	11.463	.001	.163
Time x Nationality	1	.1.292	.260	.021
Error	59			

Figure 16. Negative Image (Experiment Group) by Time and Nationality



Repeated measures plot for negative image, by time (within-subjects) and nationality (between-subjects), where items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging between 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

Deriving from what has been said, the results suggest a positive change with regards to the overall image perceived by Palestinian and American members of the experiment group. It is also indicated that positive images were enhanced as a result of online social networking through Facebook, while the way negative images developed was influenced by nationality. Americans were more prone to adopt positive change to the negative images and stereotypes they perceived of Palestinians, while Palestinians did show a positive change within this regard.

*“How do you Feel...?!”*

Throughout the Facebook discussion, the participants of the experiment group were given the liberty to express any type of opinion they wanted, and open up any topic for discussion. As mentioned earlier, twelve discussion topics, ranging from political issues to social and cultural issues, made it possible for the participants to interact with each, and for some of them to get to know each other better. The pretest questionnaire included an essay question where participants were asked to describe the opposite national group. It was prevalent that many American have expressed the little experience they have had with Palestinians, and so forth, reflected on the way media portrayed them. On the other hand, Palestinians made clear the distinction between their attitudes towards the American people, and they feelings towards the U.S. foreign policy, and how it affects the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and thereby, their daily lives.

This difference in the existence of experiences and strong views about each other was reflected in the Facebook discussion in a way that made the American participants pose several questions, as a means of learning more. By qualitatively analyzing the content of the group, we can infer that the Americans took the role of interviewer, while the Palestinians were the interviewees. The first post in the group, which was by an American female, was a question about “how do Palestinians feel about the way American media reports on Palestine and Israel?” This question became the headline for the interaction for a few days, where Palestinians and Americans expressed how they thought media were biased against the Palestinians. A Palestinian male participant responded “I think it [American media] is extremely biased, and very selective, portraying the Palestinians either as Islamic fanatics who want to kill the “Jews”

everywhere or a bunch of ignorant peasants.” Another participant posted a link to a documentary movie on google.com called “Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land” in a way to encourage his counterparts to get more information about the American media coverage and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A Palestinian participant expressed his opinion towards the American media bias against Palestinians saying: “Basically, pretty much all of us agree that the American media is obviously biased, taking sides with Israel through thick and thin, through good and bad, in sickness and in health.” A female American participants responded:

I have no doubt that American media is biased against the Palestinians. I grew up in a very small, very Southern Baptist town here in Missouri. All I know about Palestine (which, admittedly, is very little – one reason I’m in this group), I had to find out on my own. We never really learned about it in school. I’m sure I have all kinds of misinformation about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict due to the poor (and in my case, nearly non-existent local) media coverage. (comment by an American participant, April 5, 2008).

More comments resonated these opinions, and explored how the lack of historical and political emphasis on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through the American educational system, is a reason for the lack of information and misinformation. It was only two days after the discussion had started that Palestinian participants started to voice their conceptions about the American people. A Palestinian male participant posted:

I don’t intend to be offensive in any sense, but my conception of the Americans in particular and Europeans as well, is that they have this

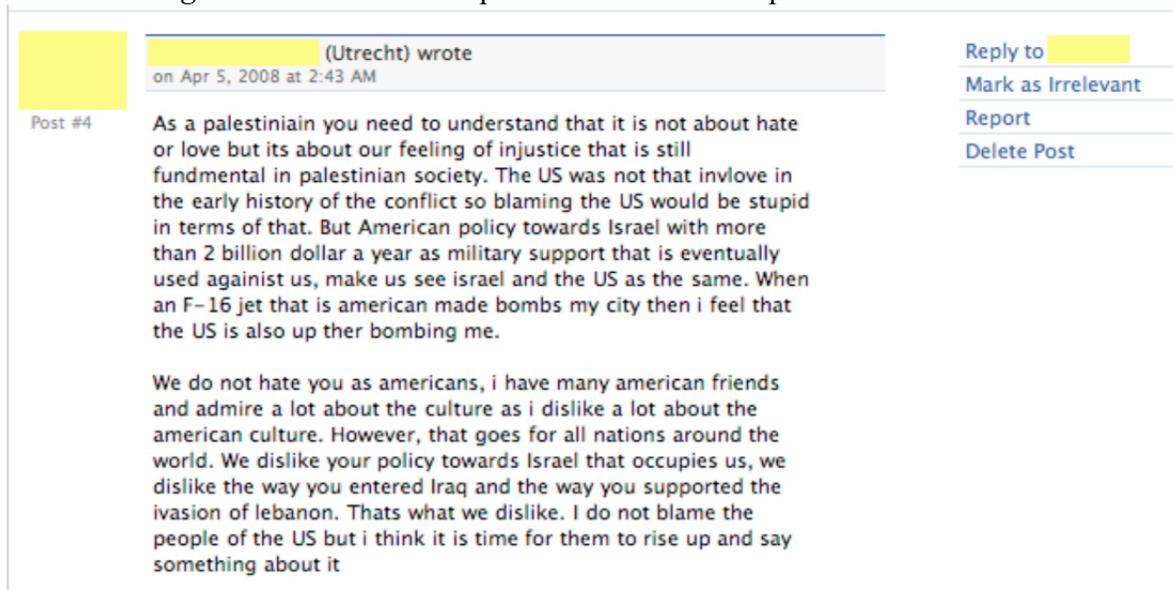
feeling of the superior race. Superman who saves the world or that you have to protect your lifestyle from the primitive human beings on the other side of the world. It's a stereotypical image but I can't help but get that conception of Americans, even though I don't claim that this applies to every American. (Comment posted by a Palestinian participant, April 6, 2008).

An American participant expressed that he thinks "Americans and Western Europeans are certainly arrogant," and reflecting that such an attitude goes back to the "colonial days of England and their "missionary" work in African and other places." He also said that more of what happened and what is happening now is trying to make other people more like Americans, by exporting the American lifestyle and values.

Another dimension of the discussion was related to the growing feeling of animosity toward the United States. Several American participants asked whether the Palestinians hate Americans, and if so, then why. A Palestinian participant responded: "the great injustice the Palestinians are still facing is creating more hate not only to Israel but to the international [community] as well." This discussion was also emphasized in separate discussion topic titled "Palestinian opinion of Americans." A Palestinian responded: "I personally don't hate Americans, because I think they are like any people in the world want to live normal lives. However, I deeply hate the American government, I really do and I do blame it for all the misery the world lives." Another Palestinian echoed what the previous participant posted, and she added that the continuous support to Israel, against both the Palestinians and Lebanese, is the reason why people develop animosity towards the U.S. foreign policy. She adds: "one of the funny nicknames that

people in Palestine [have for Israel is] that Israel [is] like another state of America and like its spoiled child whatever they do or say there is always an excuse for all their actions.” It was obvious that there were polarized opinions about the US amongst the Palestinian participants. For example, a Palestinian participant shared his experience in the U.S. when he was not treated well because of his nationality, and therefore he developed a kind of a hatred towards the American.” Such sharp comments were not very prevalent in the discussion. Most people tried to express their opinions in consideration of the ‘other’ participants.

*Figure 17. Discussion Topic Post: Palestinian Opinion of Americans*



The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook post. On the left, there is a yellow profile picture placeholder and the text "Post #4". The post header indicates it was written by "(Utrecht)" on "Apr 5, 2008 at 2:43 AM". To the right of the post are four interactive options: "Reply to [redacted]", "Mark as Irrelevant", "Report", and "Delete Post". The main text of the post is as follows:

As a palestinian you need to understand that it is not about hate or love but its about our feeling of injustice that is still fundamental in palestinian society. The US was not that invlove in the early history of the conflict so blaming the US would be stupid in terms of that. But American policy towards Israel with more than 2 billion dollar a year as military support that is eventually used against us, make us see israel and the US as the same. When an F-16 jet that is american made bombs my city then i feel that the US is also up ther bombing me.

We do not hate you as americans, i have many american friends and admire a lot about the culture as i dislike a lot about the american culture. However, that goes for all nations around the world. We dislike your policy towards Israel that occupies us, we dislike the way you entered Iraq and the way you supported the ivasion of lebanon. Thats what we dislike. I do not blame the people of the US but i think it is time for them to rise up and say something about it

Post by a Palestinian participant from the Facebook group, discussion topic: “Palestinian opinions of Americans,” posted on April 5, 2008 at 02:43 a.m.

Many of the comments criticized both media and the educational system for the lack of information or misinformation. Such a constant justification was met with frustration by a Palestinian participant: “I think that citizens of one of the most influential [countries] on earth (the United States) have a responsibility to be more educated about what’s happening in the other side of the world.” Other comments were intra-nationally

discussed about the benefit of the U.S.'s involvement in what was referred to as "the affairs of other nations." Some participants even called for an isolationist foreign policy, which instigated a Palestinian to respond: "well, personally, I think if American gov [government] steps back and take[s] care of its own biz [business] things in the world will be better..." Another American participants responded: "the frustrating thing about the involvement of the U.S. government in foreign affairs is that it does not seem to be motivated by a genuine concern for those who are oppressed or for a true desire to spread democracy."

What was interesting is that not many of the anticipated negative images of Palestinians were raised in the discussions. Most of the comments started with highlighting the influence of media and how media creates such stereotypes. On the contrary, many people raised positive images of Palestinians. For example: "I have to say when I was in Palestine, I felt more comfortable being myself and speaking with individuals than I feel here in the United States." In addition, there were a number of sympathetic comments about the suffering of Palestinian posted by American participants, as well.

On the other hand, with regards to the images of Americans as perceived by Palestinians, there were some participants who mentioned the word "superior," or "arrogant." However, on the social and cultural level, there was much appreciation and fascination for American culture, but still was influenced by the American foreign policy:

When I was a small kid, I had the dream of visiting the "country of freedom and innovation." However, now things and thoughts are totally different. America reminds me of the weapons that are being used against

my people everyday. It reminds me of more than 45 times Vetoes on condemnation of Israel [UN resolutions vetoed by the U.S.] it reminds me of the ultimate technological and economical support of Israel. I believe the American people should put more efforts to influence the media and decision makers in DC. What the US government is doing around the world is not only affecting us but Americans as well. (post by a Palestinian participant, April 12, 2008).

Another Palestinian participants echoed what the previous one had said, yet she also brought a different perspective:

... our opinions of Americans are also influenced by people like Rachel Corrie who Israel killed and run down with a bulldozer as she was protesting a house demolition of a Palestinian home. To us, Rachel, is America... Martin Luther King is that America too. A very different America than that of Bush and a few others. (post by a Palestinian participant, April 5, 2008).

It was observed after the second week of discussion, that participants showed more in-depth understanding of the 'other' side and their point of view. For example an American stated her aspirations that "the media would give more context so that Americans would know more about what is going on, instead of trying to explain something in a 30-second clip. The issue is much more important than a 30-second clip can explain." Another American participant concluded: "both Palestinians and Americans are not seeing accurate depictions of each other."

Based on the content of the Facebook group, we can infer that the change in opinions and attitudes towards each other occurred in different stages. The first stage, which took place during the first two weeks of the discussion, where both sides were posing the questions they have in mind, stating the misconceptions, and explaining why stereotypes emerge about Palestinians and Americans. During this stage, the Americans, basically, posed the questions, and the Palestinian responded, even some of them became defensive in trying to respond to the questions. The second stage, which has started during the second week, both national groups started to gather around points of commonality, and if not having a better understanding of the 'other,' started realizing that they were misinformed and that they had stereotypical views of the other national group. The third stage of the interaction occurred during the third and fourth weeks of the interaction. Worthy of mentioning, that during these two weeks, the traffic on the Facebook group slowed down a little bit, yet it picked up again, as participants started highlighting the differences among the two cultures in an easier way, as well as banking upon the relationships that have developed through indicating the points of commonality. What was interesting is that there was appreciation of each other's points of view, traditions, and social norms.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study investigated whether the images and stereotypes Palestinian and American youth hold of each other would change as a result of interacting throughout a closed Facebook group. In addition, the research also aspired to understand the change that would happen to the participants' psychosocial well-being and social capital as a result of the interaction. It was evident from the results that the research hypotheses were supported, either partially or fully.

### Summary of Main Findings

The study tested the influence of online social networking through a closed Facebook group with regards to four major dependent variables: the level of interaction, psychosocial well-being, social capital, and the images perceived by Palestinian and American participants of each other. Following is a brief summary of the major findings with regards to each of the four variables.

#### Level of Interaction

The results showed a significant influence of online social networking on the development of positive relationships and companionship/closeness among the participants. More than half of the American participants of the experiment group self-reported they liked some of the counterparts from the Facebook group, with a lower percentage for the Palestinian participants. It was also shown that Palestinians were more prone to express their intent to meet some of their American counterparts

(companionship/closeness) when compared to the intent of American participants. The vast majority of participants expressed their negation when they were asked whether they disliked any participant from the Facebook group, which indicated the development of positive relationships among participants.

#### Psychosocial Well-Being

The results indicated a positive change with regards to psychosocial well-being for participants of both the experiment and control group. While the participants' satisfaction with life was significantly and positively influenced over time, their self-esteem did not change significantly. It was also illustrated by the results that nationality was a main effect on the experiment group participants' satisfaction with life, where it was shown that the American participants were more satisfied with their lives, when compared to Palestinians. It was also illustrated that American participants self-reported a positive change in their satisfaction with life in the posttest, when comparing their answers to the pretest, while the Palestinians had a slight change within this regard. Having said this, we can infer that psychosocial well-being might have been influenced by online social networking, yet we are not sure about that, especially because the research group was not significant in relation to psychosocial well-being, self-esteem and satisfaction with life.

#### *Social Capital*

The measures for social capital were analyzed in two different ways. The first was comparing the way participants perceived their social capital over time, to understand how online social networking (Facebook group) influenced their social capital. The results showed that there was a positive change in the participants' social capital over

time. In addition, nationality had a main effect on social capital over time, where both Palestinian and American participants' social capital was positively influenced with regards to the two time intervals of the study (pretest and posttest). With regards to the experiment group, nationality was also a main effect on bridging, bonding, maintained, and overall social capital. Both Palestinian and American participants of the experiment group illustrated positive change in these areas. The fact that research group did not show a significant relationship to social capital, also, makes us unsure whether the positive change in the experiment group's social capital was due to their interaction on Facebook amongst American and Palestinian youth.

The other analysis was conducted by comparing the participants "offline social capital," which represents the way participants perceived their networks within their own communities, and "online social capital," which was measured with regards to the development of a virtual community through the Facebook group. The results showed a significant difference in how participants perceived their offline and online social capital, where the later was perceived lower when compared to offline social capital. The influence of time and nationality was also significant over the nature of social capital (offline versus online) for the three sub-measures of bridging, bonding and maintained social capital. The results, hence, indicate that experiment group members were more prone to bank upon the networks of relationships they have in their own 'offline' communities, yet, the Facebook group was not regarded with the same extent of their 'offline' communities as a place where they could bank upon their relationships for the realization of what Putnam (2000) identifies as "social reciprocity."

### *Image and Stereotypes*

There was a significant positive change in the images and stereotypes perceived by the participants of the experiment group, especially since the control group participants did not show any significant change of the images and stereotypes they held about each other, it is more plausible that the change in the images and stereotypes perceived by the experiment group members occurred due to their online interaction through Facebook. It was also found that the participants of the experiment group showed a positive change with regards to positive images and association, as well as a positive change approaching significance with regards to negative images and stereotypes. The results showed that there was also a main effect for nationality on image. Both Palestinians and Americans were positively influenced with regards to the images they held about each other over time, especially with regards to the overall image and positive image, which indicates that online social networking through Facebook was the reason for this change. However, Palestinians and American participants differed with regards to negative images; Americans were influenced positively, thereby yielding in more positive attitudes of Palestinians when they were asked about the negative associations over time, whereas Palestinians' negative attitudes were slightly reinforced.

### Discussion of Results

The main inference to be made from this study is that online social networking through a closed Facebook group, where Palestinian and American youth interacted virtually, resulted in the development of positive relationships between them, leading to the positive influence over the negative images and stereotypes they perceived of each other, and the enhancement of the positive ones. The results also, indicate the possibility

that such an interaction can also influence young people's attitudes towards themselves, their satisfaction with their own lives, their civic engagement, and sense of belonging to cross-cultural/cross-national virtual community.

#### Images and stereotypes

Stereotypes are described to be both cognitive and motivational processes that help people simplify the way they perceive and understand the 'other.' They are "beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of a certain group," that sometimes go beyond the state of belief into forming theories about other groups of people by generalizing a certain idea to the whole group sharing some of the characteristics with the person (Hilton & Hoppel, 1996, p. 239). With regards to the images Palestinians and Americans hold about each other, scholars have studied the reasons stereotypical images emerge and are ingrained. As for Palestinians, these images were influenced by the political environment and political interest, yet are rooted by the way mass media interprets and frames the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Sabbagh, 1990; Said, 1978; Said, 2001; Shaheen, 2003). On the other hand, an explanation for stereotyping Americans by Palestinians and other national group in the Arab and Muslim world is a results of anti-Americanism, due to the difference in life values, but most importantly, due to the American foreign policy namely toward the Middle East, especially the war in Iraq and the continuous support to Israel, as well as the way Arab media portrays Americans(Nye, 2004).

Izumi and Hammonds (2007) argued against several sociological scholars, by saying that stereotypes can be suppressed as a means to gradually eliminate them. The results showed that around 20% of the sample of participants self-reported that they have

visited the United States (Palestinians) or the Holy Land (Americans). It is illustrated that the majority of participants had no personal experience, whatsoever, with people from the opposite national group, the image they have of each other is based on *what the media told them*. This was also prevalent in the participants' answers to the essay question in the pretest, as well as several comments on the Facebook group. What this means is that the process of suppressing stereotypes that Izumi and Hammonds (2007) talked about was facilitated through online social networking and the interaction through Facebook. It was vividly illustrated that negative images, especially those of Palestinians as perceived by Americans, were changed to more positive associations. In addition, positive associations were enriched due to the 'virtual personal experience' the participants had.

The researcher believes that the reason for that might be the fact that the time when the participants filled out the posttest questionnaires was a sensitive time for the Palestinians, especially that the month of May is Israel's celebration of its independence, and the Palestinians remembrance of the 1948 catastrophe "Nakba." In fact the last comment on the main group wall was by a Palestinian reflecting on these issues:

... it has been so long since I wrote the last thing >>> but what I heard [lately] in the news motivate[d] me strongly to write again even if it is the last day... I was wondering if u heard about "George Bush' visit to the Middle East in the same time that "Israel" is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> year since it was existed in 1948>>> most the news ASSERT that the President is coming NOT for discussing the rising situation in the Middle East but to attend the Jewish Festivals>>> so what do u think about this??? Especially that the elections are getting closer??? And what is the American's Media

say about this event which we call in Palestine the “DISASTER”??? Does it mention any thing about it??? And in contrast what about the ISRAELI celebrations???? Please I am so interested to know these things>> this is the CORE of our case... thnx (post of a Palestinian participant, May 4, 2008)

#### Level of interaction

Petrózi et al. (2007) conceptualized the level of interaction through measuring the strength of ties between members of the virtual network, which is “a quantifiable property that characterizes the link between two nodes.” The results showed that American participants were more keen and comfortable in carrying out virtual positive relationships. They scored higher when asked about the people they like or disliked from the Facebook group. On the other end, Palestinians were more keen to develop companionship and express their intent for closeness with the participants, especially since they scored higher on the question as to whether they would like to meet someone from the group. What could be concluded is that Palestinians give higher interest in transforming the relationships developed online to offline one through expressing more willingness to meet Americans, when compared with Americans, who were pretty comfortable in maintaining online relationships with their Palestinian counterparts.

Linking the level of interaction to the change in images and stereotypes, we can derive that the development of positive relations can lead to socialization. Granovetter (1983) explained weak ties can lead to creating networks that can facilitate the socialization among strong ties. Having said this, it is suggested that online social networking contributes to the “strength of weak ties,” and hence the experience that the

study participants have had through the Facebook group resulted in the creation of strong weak ties between them. With that happening, the potential for change in the negative images they perceived of each other was activated, and more importantly the reinforcement of positive attitudes was heightened.

#### Psychosocial well-being and social capital

From a different perspective, the study helped us understand that online social networking across cultures and national groups can influence the individual psychosocial well-being and social capital. Putnam (2000) explained that the core concept of social capital is how social networks and ties can generate social reciprocity. With regards to this study, the results showed a positive change with regards to the participants' social capital, thereby, suggesting that being involved in online social networking can influence the way participants view their role in the society, as well as they way they engage in it. It was interesting to see how the participants differentiated between their offline and online social capital. Ellison et al. (2007) describe Facebook as a social networking utility where its users maintained their offline relationships through an online environment. What this study did is reversing the order of relationship building, where participants, especially cross-nationally, did not know each other beforehand, and hence, the period of one month was given for them to engage in discussions about the images and stereotypes they have of each other. The results illustrated that they did not perceive the virtual community, being the Facebook group created for the study, as strongly as they perceived their offline communities. However, there are different indicators of the development of 'strong weak ties' that outlined a sense of a virtual community throughout the Facebook group.

It is also shown that online social networking can possibly influence the psychosocial well-being of participants. Participants showed improvement in their satisfaction with life over the time of the study. Regardless of the fact that the research group was not significantly related to the change in the participants' psychosocial well-being, yet the study poses the possibility that the influence might have been caused by the online interaction. Scholars have explained that using the internet, especially for "communicative reasons" is thought to develop a person's psychosocial well-being (Morgan & Cotton, 2003; Rohall & Cotton, 2002). The results indicate that the experience of online social networking through the Facebook group has influenced the development of positive relationships amongst youth from two national groups that are thousands of miles apart from each other, and have different cultures, traditions and social norms. Throughout the Facebook discussion, the participants shared a lot about themselves, highlighted the differences and commonalities between their cultures, and showed appreciation for the 'other.' Such a process is thought to have had a positive influence on the participants' psychosocial well-being and satisfaction with life.

#### Overall Remarks

It becomes important within the boundaries of this study to discuss the influence of media, especially new media (Internet) on how people from different cultures and countries communicate with each other. As mentioned elsewhere, the participants had a fair knowledge of each other's countries, as their knowledge was predominantly shaped and influenced by their previous mainstream media exposure.

Previous research shows that media on both sides are highly biased when it comes to covering the Palestinians and Americans. Therefore, it is of value to understand the

results of this study as a starting point in the way people influence each other throughout interactive media. The researcher took a decision not to get involved in shaping the discussions amongst the participants, with the intent of observing the way they will interact. As mentioned earlier, the researcher waited until the majority of participants finished filling out the pretest questionnaire and then added them simultaneously to the Facebook group. It was a matter of hours, when the participants started posing questions and responding to each other. If done differently, the results of this study might be different. The fact that there was horizontal and interactive communications amongst the participants gives this study a great value to the way average people can influence each other, away from the refined way of mainstream media messages.

#### Future research

This study is considered an exploratory study through utilizing the method of online field experiment to study the influence of online social networking on the images and stereotypes perceived by different national groups, as well as the level of interaction, psychosocial well-being, and social capital. Having said that, the fact that the study design was an online field experiment poses two limitations. The first is the low level of control over the study and the participants. The second is the fact that it was conducted in an online setting, which poses the risk of experimental mortality (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

Another limitation is the fact that the questionnaires used in the study were long, which might have caused participant fatigue. In addition, the examination of how individual participants change over time, may have caused carry-over effects, where the

participants might have remembered the questions they were asked in the questionnaire (Wimmen & Dominick, 2006).

Future research should consider expanding this study, both conceptually and methodologically. Conceptually, future research be done with including measures related to political efficacy, as well as the way participants of a certain national group perceive themselves, within a comparative framework. On the methodological part, future studies can utilize expansion of the research setting, such as extending the amount of time allocated for the period of exposure to the experimental treatment. Moreover, due to the considerable drop-out rate from the study, it is advised that future research recruits more participants, to improve the quality of effect size and power.

Being an exploratory study, there is high potential to build up on the results for future research. On a more ambitious level, the results of the study can be followed-up by facilitating cultural exchange between the Palestinian and American participants to understand how the dependent variables would be influenced when the relationships amongst participants are transformed from online (virtual interaction) to offline (face-to-face interaction). This study can also be replicated with other groups that have stereotypical images of each other, whether on a national or international levels.

## Conclusion

This research was exploratory, as mentioned above, that gave important implications for the study of cross-cultural and cross-national relations among young people from different cultures and countries. The research suggested that there was an enhancement of positive attitudes among Palestinian and American youth based on the

online interaction through Facebook. Furthermore, the study gives insights to the development of virtual communities that are goal-oriented to bridging the gap between members of two national groups. As Facebook is considered a social networking utility to maintain offline relationships, as well develop new relationships, this study suggests that it could also be utilized to create international networks amongst people from different culture and countries. Such an endeavor is sought to be important for the building of a global community, where geographical distance and boundaries can melt down to create networks of involved citizens.

The results of the study are perceived important, also, to the study of public diplomacy that is geared by grassroots networks. Nye (2004) promoted the idea of utilizing soft power to achieve political goals on the international level, as well as enhancing the attraction amongst other nations and culture towards one's own values and ideas. This study gives a preliminary insight for the study of a new genre of public diplomacy, where the process is not top-down, nor bottom-up, but rather horizontal amongst people from different civilizations. Due to the efficiency, convenience and low cost of the Internet, and based on the remarkable developments in how it is utilized in the socio-political and economic processes, its influence and use can be geared towards the creation of strong networks across nations, with the aim of bridging the gaps among cultures and enhancing understanding, tolerance and peace.

**APPENDIX A**  
**PYALARA Permission Letter**

**ORGANIZATIONAL CONSENT FORM**

**Ms. Hania Bitar**

Director General  
Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership And Rights Activation – PYALARA  
Orabi Building, Ground & 2<sup>nd</sup> Floors  
Jerusalem-Ramallah St.  
Al-Bireh, Palestine  
Phone/Fax: +972 (0)2 242-6280/1  
Email: [pyalara@pyalara.org](mailto:pyalara@pyalara.org)  
<http://www.pyalara.org>

March 18, 2008

**Dear Ms. Bitar,**

Let me start by thanking for your readiness to help me in recruiting participants for my Master's Thesis research. For the purpose of this study, I would need to recruit 65 Palestinian youth, who will be part of my online experiment. All participants will be asked to fill out two web-based questionnaires that each a month apart. Of the group of participants, 40 young people from Palestine will be involved in an online one-month interaction with 40 other young people from the United States of America. The remaining 25 participants will only take the two web-based questionnaires. Participants should be at least 18 years old, can communicate fluently in English, and are familiar with the Internet, preferably Facebook.

I would highly appreciate it if you encourage your young members/students to take part in the experiment, as well as supplying them with my email address ([sa334@missouri.edu](mailto:sa334@missouri.edu)) to contact me if they are interested in participating in the experiment or sending me email contact information for prospect participants so that I can contact them.

PYALARA does not, in any way, hold any responsibility for the experiment. The results of experiment will only be used for the purpose of my Master's thesis, and the participants' identities will be secured anonymous and confidential in reporting the results.

**PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CAREFULLY. IF YOU  
AGREE TO THEM, PLEASE SIGN AT THE END OF THE FORM.**

**Description of the study:** The purpose of this study is to understand how online interaction through a closed Facebook group can influence the images, perceptions and stereotypes of Palestinian and American youth about each other. The study will utilize a closed Facebook group to carry out a one-month discussion, through which participants will be asked to interact and discuss issues that are related to both Palestine and the United States. The study is part of the Master's thesis and graduation requirement for the researcher.

**What will be done:** Upon the recruitment of participants, they will be asked to carry out the following tasks:

1. All 65 participants will fill out a questionnaire before participating in the online discussions;
2. 40 participants from Palestine will actively participate in the Facebook group discussion for one month, thereby, interacting with another group of 40 American youth; and,
3. All 65 participants will fill out a questionnaire after the one-month online discussion.

Accepting to take part in this experiment means that participants will:

1. Participate actively in the Facebook group discussion through commenting and contributing to the discussion at least once a week. Their participation also enables them to post any type of multimedia content on the Facebook group wall that apply to the topic(s) of discussion;
2. Filling out the two questionnaires in a timely manner;
3. Committing to good conduct and behavior through the group discussion. This entails:
  - a. Refraining from the use of any insensitive, obscene, offensive, and/or harmful language. By no means does this mean that the participants should be constrained from expressing their opinion freely and openly;
  - b. Maintaining a level of respect to fellow participants;
  - c. Avoiding posting any irrelevant, offensive, insensitive, obscene, and/or harmful multimedia content on the discussion group wall; and,
  - d. Committing to the confidentiality of the opinions expressed in the discussion group. By no means are the contents, opinions and thoughts of other participants are considered public. By accepting to participate in this study, participants are committing to NOT copying, sharing, publishing, or any form of publicizing the other participants' opinions expressed in the group discussion.
4. Expressing their genuine opinions and thoughts throughout the discussion in the Facebook group. The Facebook group discussion is a platform for free expression of one's opinions and thoughts. Participants shall not feel constrained, at any time, to express themselves, comment on other participants' ideas, and generate relevant discussion thoughts and topics; and,
5. Accepting the above commitment and those presented in *Informed Consent Form*, and sending a signed copy to the researcher.



**Risks or Discomfort:** If participants decide to take part in the study, they may be exposed to opinions and ideas that are different from theirs. They may face situations, where they completely disagree with the other participants' opinion and attitudes. Furthermore, they will be asked to interact with people whom they might have not met or known before, which may pose some social discomfort, depending on their sensitivity and/or personality.

**Benefits of the Study:** In addition to the fact that their participation is essential to the completion of the research and the achievement of my Master's degree, the study is an opportunity for participants to interact with other young people from a different country and culture. It is a genuine opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns about the issue of study, and to share thoughts, ideas, and experience with people who might share or disagree with their ideas and opinions. The results of the study are beneficial for understanding the role new media plays in cross-cultural communication on the international level.

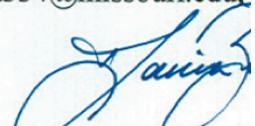
**Confidentiality:** All the opinions expressed in the Facebook discussion group will be strictly confidential, and will only be used for the purpose of this study. In referencing their comments, ideas and thoughts, I will deal with them in complete anonymity. After the study is completed, the Facebook discussion group will be closed, and the discussion content will be documented until the study is completed. I will save all the data as encrypted files that are password protected, where I will be the only person with access to it. Furthermore, all participants will be requested to commit to confidentiality of the others' opinions and thoughts, and that no participant can use, copy, publish, publicize or share any of the information provided by any participant. Participants are asked to commit to not saving any of the discussion group content, and/or using it in the near and far future.

I will make sure the participants' privacy is protected to the highest level. None of the information will identify them by name. All records will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

**Paid Incentives:** Participation in this study does not entail any paid incentives for the participants. Upon possible arrangements with their reference, they might be rewarded with class participation credit or any non-financial incentive.

**Their rights as participants:** Participation in this study is voluntary. The decision to take part in this study is up to the participants themselves. They do not have to participate. If they decide to take part in the study, they can change their mind and drop out of the study at any time without affecting them in the future, in any way. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which they are entitled. If they wish to quit, simply inform Saleem Alhabash of your decision.

**Their rights and complaints:** If the participants are not satisfied with the way this study is performed, they may discuss their complaints with Saleem Alhabash, who can be reached by phone: +1(573) 771-0287/(479) 409-0116, or by email: sa334@missouri.edu.



anonymously, if they choose. In addition, they may contact University of Missouri, Office of Research, 205 Jesse Hall, Columbia, MO, (573) 882-9500.

Please keep a printed copy of this form for future reference.

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### PERMISSION FOR USE OF YOUR INFORMATION

**Please indicate your choice about research being performed on your information collected by the Facebook group by answering the questions below.**

Do you give your permission for your information to be used in this study and to be used for anonymous research, where not identifying information will be released?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Do you give your permission to be contacted in the future and asked for your consent to participate in any research project which would require identifying information to be released to the investigators?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Do you give your permission to be contacted about possible participation in future research project that may grow out of research on your personal information?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

---

### SIGNATURE

I confirm that the purpose of the research, the study procedures, the possible risks and discomforts as well as the potential benefits that the participants experience have been explained to me. My signature below indicates the willingness of PYALARA to help the researcher in recruiting Palestinian participants.

*PYALARA*  
HANIA BITAR  
DIRECTOR GENERAL\*

*Hania Bitar*  
SIGNATURE

19/03/2008  
Date

*Jerusalem*  
SIGNED IN

\* Please PRINT NAME.

**APPENDIX B**  
**Consent Form**

**Consent Form for Experiment Group Participants**

**CONSENT FORM**

*You have been asked to take part in a research project described below. The researcher will explain the project to you in detail, in the following lines. You should feel free to ask questions. If you have more questions later, Saleem Alhabash, the person mainly responsible for this study, who can be reached by phone: +1 (573) 771-0287/(479) 409-0116, or by email: sa334@missouri.edu, will discuss those questions with you. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research project.*

**Description of the study:** The purpose of this study is to understand how online interaction through a closed Facebook group can influence the images, perceptions and stereotypes of Palestinian and American youth about each other. The study will utilize a closed Facebook group to carry out a one-month discussion, through participants will be asked to interact and discuss issues that are related to both Palestine and the United States. The study is part of the Master's thesis and graduation requirement for the researcher.

**What will be done:** If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Fill out a questionnaire before participating in the online discussions;
2. Actively participate in the Facebook group discussion for one month; and,
3. Filling out a questionnaire after the one-month online discussion.

Accepting to take part in this experiment means that you will:

1. Participate actively in the Facebook group discussion through commenting and contributing to the discussion at least once a week. Your participation also enables you to post any type of multimedia content on the Facebook group wall that apply to the topic(s) of discussion;
2. Filling out the two questionnaires in a timely manner;
3. Committing to good conduct and behavior through the group discussion. This entails:
  - a. Refraining from the use of any insensitive, obscene, offensive, and/or harmful language. By no means does this mean that you should be constrained from expressing your opinion freely and openly;
  - b. Maintaining a level of respect to fellow participants;
  - c. Avoiding posting any irrelevant, offensive, insensitive, obscene, and/or harmful multimedia content on the discussion group wall; and,
  - d. Committing to the confidentiality of the opinions expressed in the discussion group. By no means are the contents, opinions and thoughts of other participants are considered public. By accepting to participate in this study, you are committing to not

copying, sharing, publishing, or any form of publicizing the other participants' opinions expressed in the group discussion.

4. Expressing your genuine opinions and thoughts throughout the discussion in the Facebook group. The Facebook group discussion is a platform for free expression of one's opinions and thoughts. You shall not feel constrained, at any time, to express yourself, comment on other participants' ideas, and generate relevant discussion thoughts and topics; and,

5. Accepting the above commitment and those presented in *Informed Consent Form*, and sending a signed copy to the researcher.

**Risks or Discomfort:** If you decide to take part in the study, you may be exposed to opinions and ideas that are different from yours. You may face situations, where you completely disagree with the other participants' opinion and attitudes. Furthermore, you will be asked to interact with people whom you might have not met or known before, which may pose some social discomfort, depending on your sensitivity and/or personality.

**Benefits of the Study:** In addition to the fact that your participation is essential to the completion of the research and the achievement of my Master's degree, the study is an opportunity for you to interact with other young people from a different country and culture. It is a genuine opportunity to voice your opinions and concerns about the issue of study, and to share thoughts, ideas, and experience with people who might share or disagree with your ideas and opinions. The results of the study are beneficial for understanding the role new media plays in cross-cultural communication on the international level.

**Confidentiality:** All the opinions expressed in the Facebook discussion group will be strictly confidential, and will only be used for the purpose of this study. In referencing your comments, ideas and thoughts, I will deal with them in complete anonymity. After the study is completed, the Facebook discussion group will be closed, and the discussion content will be documented until the study is completed. I will save all the data as encrypted files password protected, where I will be the only person with access to it. Furthermore, all participants will be requested to commit to confidentiality of the others' opinions and thoughts, and that no participant can use, copy, publish, publicize or share any of the information provided by any participant. Participants are asked to commit to saving any of the discussion group content, and/or using it in the near and far future.

I will make sure your privacy is protected to the highest level. None of the information will identify you by name. All records will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

**Paid Incentives:** Participation in this study does not entail any paid incentives for you. Upon possible arrangements with your reference, you might be rewarded with class participation credit or any non-financial incentive.

**Your rights as a participant:** Participation in this study is voluntary. The decision to take part in this study is up to you. You do not have to participate. If you decide to take part in the study, you can change your mind and drop out of the study at any time without

affecting you in the future, in any way. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you wish to quit, simply inform Saleem Alhabash of your decision.

**Your rights and complaints:** If you are not satisfied with the way this study is performed, you may discuss your complaints with Saleem Alhabash, who can be reached by phone: +1(573) 771-0287/(479) 409-0116, or by email: sa334@missouri.edu, anonymously, if you choose. In addition, you may contact University of Missouri, Office of Research, 205 Jesse Hall, Columbia, MO, (573) 882-9500.

You may keep a copy of this consent form

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### PERMISSION FOR USE OF YOUR INFORMATION

**Please indicate your choice about research being performed on your information collected by the Facebook group by answering the questions below.**

Do you give your permission for your information to be used in this study and to be used for anonymous research, where not identifying information will be released?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Do you give your permission to be contacted in the future and asked for your consent to participate in any research project which would require identifying information to be released to the investigators?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Do you give your permission to be contacted about possible participation in future research project that may grow out of research on your personal information?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

---

### SIGNATURE

I confirm that the purpose of the research, the study procedures, the possible risks and discomforts as well as the potential benefits that I may experience have been explained to me. Alternative to my participation in the study have also have been discussed. My signature below indicates my willingness to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\* Participant must be at least 18 years old.

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## Consent Form for Control Group

# CONSENT FORM

*You have been asked to take part in a research project described below. The researcher will explain the project to you in detail, in the following lines. You should feel free to ask questions. If you have more questions later, Saleem Alhabash, the person mainly responsible for this study, who can be reached by phone: +1 (573) 771-0287/(479) 409-0116, or by email: sa334@missouri.edu, will discuss those questions with you. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research project.*

**What will be done:** If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill out two questionnaires that are about one month apart. The first one will be filled out now, and the second one will be filled out later when contacted again by the researcher.

**Risks or Discomfort:** You will be asked to fill out two questionnaires that have a set of questions related to your personal opinion and viewpoints. You will be asked to express your genuine thoughts and beliefs. Some of the questions might be considered sensitive to answer by some of the participants, due to their political and socioeconomic nature.

**Confidentiality:** All the opinions expressed in the questionnaires will be strictly confidential, and will only be used for the purpose of this study. The researcher and the University of Missouri-Columbia will protect your privacy. None of the information will identify you by name. All records will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

**Your rights as a participant:** Participation in this study is voluntary. The decision to take part in this study is up to you. You do not have to participate. If you decide to take part in the study, you can change your mind and drop out of the study at any time without affecting you in the future, in any way. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you wish to quit, simply inform Saleem Alhabash of your decision.

**Your rights and complaints:** If you are not satisfied with the way this study is performed, you may discuss your complaints with Saleem Alhabash, who can be reached by phone: +1(573) 771-0287/(479) 409-0116, or by email: sa334@missouri.edu, anonymously, if you choose. In addition, you may contact University of Missouri, Office of Research, 205 Jesse Hall, Columbia, MO, (573) 882-9500.

You may keep a copy of this consent form

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**PERMISSION FOR USE OF YOUR INFORMATION**

**Please indicate your choice about research being performed on your information collected by the Facebook group by answering the questions below.**

Do you give your permission for you information to be used in this study and to be used for anonymous research, where not identifying information will be released?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Do you give your permission to be contacted in the future and asked for your consent to participate in any research project which would require identifying information to be released to the investigators?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Do you give your permission to be contacted about possible participation in future research project that may grow out of research on your personal information?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

---

**SIGNATURE**

I confirm that the purpose of the research, the study procedures, the possible risks and discomforts as well as the potential benefits that I may experience have been explained to me. Alternative to my participation in the study have also have been discussed. My signature below indicates my willingness to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\* Participant must be at least 18 years old.

## APPENDIX C Pretest Questionnaires

### Pretest Questionnaire for American Experiment and Control Group

Thank you for deciding to take part in this study. As mentioned previously, this study involves testing the influence of online interaction through a closed Facebook group on the images and stereotypes of Palestinians and Americans. This questionnaire is part of the study. You are supposed to fill it out before you become part of the discussion group. You are requested to express your genuine opinion in answering the questions listed below. The researcher would highly appreciate it if you complete the questionnaire by answering all the questions. Upon completion of this questionnaire, please notify the researcher by sending him an email letter. Thanks again for taking part in the study.

1) PLEASE ENTER THE <b>4-DIGIT CODE</b> SENT TO YOU BY THE RESEARCHER HERE (i.e. AE##)

2) Do you have a Facebook account?	
Yes	
No	

3) How long have been using Facebook?	
Less than 6 months	
6  11 months	
12  17 months	
18  23 months	
24  29 months	
Over 29 months	

4) In the past week, on average, approximately how many minutes per day have you spent on Facebook?	
Less than 10 minutes	
11 - 30 minutes	
31  60 minutes	
61  90 minutes	
91  120 minutes	
More than 120 minutes (2 hours)	

5) About how many total Facebook friends do you have?	
10 friends or less	
11  50 friends	

51 ♦ 100 friends	
101 ♦ 150 friends	
151 ♦ 200 friends	
200 ♦ 251 friends	
251 ♦ 300 friends	
301 ♦ 400 friends	
More than 400 friends	

6) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Facebook is part of my everyday life					
I am proud to tell people I ♦m on Facebook					
I feel out of touch when I haven♦t logged onto Facebook for a while					
Facebook has become part of my daily routine					
I feel I am part of the Facebook community					
I would be sorry if Facebook shut down					

7) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel that I ♦m a person of worth, at least on an equally plane with others					
I feel that I have a number of good qualities					
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure					
I am able to do things as well as most other people					
I feel I do not have much to be proud of					
I take a positive attitude toward myself					
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself					
In most ways my life is close to my ideal					
The conditions of my life are excellent					
I am satisfied with my life					
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life					

If I could live my time over, I would change almost nothing					
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8) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel I am part of my community (school, society, organization, etc.)					
I am interested in what goes on in my community					
My community is a good place to be					
I would be willing to contribute money to my community after I start earning money					
Interacting with people from my community makes me want to try new things					
Interacting with people from my community makes me feel like a part of a larger community					
I am willing to spend time to support general activities in my community					
In my community, I come into contact with new people all the time					
Interacting with people at my community reminds me that everyone in the world is connected					
There are several people in my community I trust to solve my problems					
If I needed an emergency loan of \$100, I know someone in my community I can turn to					
There is someone in my community I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions					
The people I interact with in my community would be good job references for me					
I do not know people in my community well enough to get them do anything important					
I'd be able to find out about events in another town from someone in my community					
If I needed to, I could ask an acquaintance in my community to do a small favor for me					
I'd be able to stay with a community acquaintance if traveling to a different city/country					
I'd be able to find information about a job or					

internship from a community acquaintance					
It would be easy to find people to invite to a community event (reunion, celebration, etc.)					

9) Have you ever visited the Holy Land (Palestine/Israel)?	
Yes	
No	

10) If yes, how many times?

11) Have you ever interacted with one or more Palestinians? (Check all that apply)	
I have never interacted (met face-to-face, communicated) with any Palestinians	
I have met a Palestinian face-to-face	
I have one or more Palestinian friends	
I have exchanged letters with one or more Palestinians	
I have chatted with one or more Palestinians	
I have exchanged messages on Facebook with one or more Palestinians	
I have communicated with one or more Palestinians through emails	
I have communicated with one or more Palestinians through blogs	
Other (Please Specify):	

12) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think Palestinians are terrorists					
I think Palestinians are violent					
I think Palestinians do not respect women					
I believe Palestinians have different views of life when compared to Americans					
I think Palestinians are all alike					
I think the goal of Palestinians is to wipe out Israel					
I think Palestinians are innocent					
I think Palestinians are peaceful					
I think Palestinians value life					
I think Palestinians have a right to their independent state					

I know Palestinians are still occupied by the Israelis					
I assume Palestinians are generous					
I believe Palestinians are religious					
I would trust a Palestinian					
I would ask a Palestinian for a small favor					
I think I can be friends with a Palestinian					
I think I can discuss different topics with a Palestinian					
I would like to meet a Palestinian in person					

13) In the space given below, please write a short paragraph describing your own personal view of Palestinians. You can include descriptions, associations, personal experiences, or any other means of expressing your opinion.

14) On average, how often do you read a newspaper per week?

None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

15) Approximately, how much time do you spend reading a newspaper in any given day?

Less than 5 minutes	
6 ◆ 10 minutes	
11 ◆ 15 minutes	
16 ◆ 20 minutes	
21- 25 minutes	
26 ◆ 30 minutes	
More than 30 minutes	

16) On average, how often do you watch television per week?

None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

17) Approximately, how much time do you spend watching television in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 ⚡ 60 minutes	
1 ⚡ 2 hours	
2 ⚡ 3 hours	
3 ⚡ 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

18) On average, how often do you listen to the radio per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

19) Approximately, how much time do you spend listening to the radio on any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 ⚡ 60 minutes	
1 ⚡ 2 hours	
2 ⚡ 3 hours	
3 ⚡ 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

20) On average, how often do you use the internet per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

21) Approximately, how much time do you spend using the internet in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 ⚡ 60 minutes	
1 ⚡ 2 hours	
2 ⚡ 3 hours	
3 ⚡ 4 hours	

More than 4 hours	
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22) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think the US media cover the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in a balanced way					
I think the US media are objective in covering the Palestinian-Israeli conflict					
I think Palestinian media cover the United State in a balanced way					
I think Palestinian media are objective in covering the United States					
I get most of my information about Palestine from newspapers					
I get most of my information about Palestine from television news					
I get most of my information about Palestine from radio					
I get most of my information about Palestine from internet news					
I get most of my information about Palestine from blogs					
I get most of my information about the US from newspapers					
I get most of my information about the US from television news					
I get most of my information about the US from radio					
I get most of my information about the US from internet news					
I get most of my information about the US from blogs					

23) How would you describe your party identification?	
Strong Democrat	
Weak Democrat	
Independent ♦ Democrat	
Independent ♦ Republican	
Weak Republican	
Strong Republican	

Apolitical	
Other (Please Specify):	

24) Where would you place yourself on the liberal-conservative scale?	
Extremely liberal	
Liberal	
Moderate; middle of the road	
Conservative	
Extremely conservative	

25) Are you planning to vote in the upcoming November 2008 presidential elections?	
Yes	
No	
Have not decided yet	

26) How would you describe your level of interest in international politics?	
I am very interested	
I am somewhat interested	
I am not very interested	
I am not interested at all	
Don't know	

27) Who is the president of the Palestinian National Authority (government)?	
Yassir Arafat	
Isma'il Hanieh	
Mahmoud Abbas	
Salam Fayyad	
Hanan Ashrawi	
Don't know	

28) Is Palestine an independent state?	
Yes	
No	
Don't know	

29) Who is Nicolas Sarkozy?	

President of France	
President of Belgium	
Chancellor of Germany	
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom	
Secretary General of the United Nations	
Don't know	

30) In what year were you born?

--

31) What is your gender?

Male	
Female	

32) What is your race?

White/Caucasian (Non-Hispanic White)	
Black	
Native American	
Asian	
Hispanic	
Other (Please Specify):	

33) Which of the following represents your highest educational degree?

High-school	
Bachelor's degree	
Master's degree	
Ph.D. degree	
None of the above	

34) What is your family annual income level?

None \$14,999	
\$15,000 34,999	
\$35,000 64,999	
\$65,000 124,999	
\$125,000 or more	
Don't know	

35) Thank you for answering the questionnaire! You have finished the first stage of your participation in the study. The second stage of the study involves interacting with Palestinian youth through a closed Facebook group for about a month. By clicking the "SUBMIT" button below, you will be re-directed to the Facebook group page. You should request to join the group, and then participate in the group discussions. Thanks again for your participation!

## Pretest Questionnaire for Palestinian Experiment and Control Group

Thank you for deciding to take part in this study. As mentioned previously, this study involves testing the influence of online interaction through a closed Facebook group on the images and stereotypes of Palestinians and Americans. This questionnaire is part of the study. You are supposed to fill it out before you become part of the discussion group. You are requested to express your genuine opinion in answering the questions listed below. The researcher would highly appreciate it if you complete the questionnaire by answering all the questions. Upon completion of this questionnaire, please notify the researcher by sending him an email letter. Thanks again for taking part in the study.

1) PLEASE ENTER THE <b>4-DIGIT CODE</b> SENT TO YOU BY THE RESEARCHER HERE (i.e. PE##)

2) Do you have a Facebook account?	
Yes	
No	

3) How long have been using Facebook?	
Less than 6 months	
6 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 11 months	
12 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 17 months	
18 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 23 months	
24 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 29 months	
Over 29 months	

4) In the past week, on average, approximately how many minutes per day have you spent on Facebook?	
Less than 10 minutes	
11 - 30 minutes	
31 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 60 minutes	
61 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 90 minutes	
91 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 120 minutes	
More than 120 minutes (2 hours)	

5) About how many total Facebook friends do you have?	
10 friends or less	
11 - 50 friends	
51 - 100 friends	
101 - 150 friends	
151 - 200 friends	
200 - 251 friends	
251 - 300 friends	
301 - 400 friends	
More than 400 friends	

6) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Facebook is part of my everyday life					
I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook					
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while					
Facebook has become part of my daily routine					
I feel I am part of the Facebook community					
I would be sorry if Facebook shut down					

7) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equally plane with others					
I feel that I have a number of good qualities					
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure					
I am able to do things as well as most other people					
I feel I do not have much to be proud of					

I take a positive attitude toward myself					
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself					
In most ways my life is close to my ideal					
The conditions of my life are excellent					
I am satisfied with my life					
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life					
If could live my time over, I would change almost nothing					

8) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel I am part of my community (school, society, organization, etc)					
I am interested in what goes on in my community					
My community is a good place to be					
I would be willing to contribute money to my community after I start earning money					
Interacting with people from my community makes me want to try new things					
Interacting with people from my community makes me feel like a part of a larger community					
I am willing to spend time to support general activities in my community					
In my community, I come into contact with new people all the time					
Interacting with people at my community reminds me that everyone in the world is connected					
There are several people in my community I trust to solve my problems					
If I needed an emergency loan of \$100, I know someone in my community I can turn to					
There is someone in my community I can turn to for advice about making very important					

decisions					
The people I interact with in my community would be good job references for me					
I do not know people in my community well enough to get them do anything important					
I'd be able to find out about events in another town from someone in my community					
If I needed to, I could ask an acquaintance in my community to do a small favor for me					
I'd be able to stay with a community acquaintance if traveling to a different city/country					
I'd be able to find information about a job or internship from a community acquaintance					
It would be easy to find people to invite to a community event (reunion, celebration, etc)					

9) Have you ever visited the United State of America?	
Yes	
No	

10) If yes, how many times?

11) Have you ever interacted with one or more Americans? (Please check all that apply)	
I have never interacted (met face-to-face, communicated) with any Americans	
I have met an American face-to-face	
I have one or more American friends	
I have exchanged letters with one or more Americans	
I have chatted with one or more Americans	
I have exchanged messages on Facebook with one or more Americans	
I have communicated with one or more Americans through emails	
I have communicated with one or more Americans through blogs	
Other (Please Specify):	

12) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree;
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think Americans are terrorists					
I think Americans are violent					
I think Americans do not respect women					
I believe Americans have different views of life when compared to Palestinians					
I think Americans are all alike					
I think the goal of Americans is to wipe out Iraq					
I think Americans are innocent					
I think Americans are peaceful					
I think Americans value life					
I think Americans support Israel more than the Palestinians					
I believe that Americans are still occupying Iraq					
I assume Americans are generous					
I believe Americans are religious					
I would trust an American					
I would ask an American for a small favor					
I think I can be friends with An American					
I think I can discuss different topics with an American					
I would like to meet an American in person					

13) In the space given below, please write a short paragraph describing your own personal view of Americans. You can include descriptions, associations, personal experiences, or any other means of expressing your opinion.

14) On average, how often do you read a newspaper per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	

7 days/week	
-------------	--

15) Approximately, how much time do you spend reading a newspaper in any given day?	
Less than 5 minutes	
6 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 minutes	
11 <input type="checkbox"/> 15 minutes	
16 <input type="checkbox"/> 20 minutes	
21- 25 minutes	
26 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 minutes	
More than 30 minutes	

16) On average, how often do you watch television per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

17) Approximately, how much time do you spend watching television in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input type="checkbox"/> 60 minutes	
1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

18) On average, how often do you listen to the radio per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

19) Approximately, how much time do you spend listening to the radio on any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input type="radio"/> 60 minutes	
1 <input type="radio"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="radio"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="radio"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

20) On average, how often do you use the internet per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

21) Approximately, how much time do you spend using the internet in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input type="radio"/> 60 minutes	
1 <input type="radio"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="radio"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="radio"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

22) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think the US media cover the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in a balanced way					
I think the US media are objective in covering the Palestinian-Israeli conflict					
I think Palestinian media cover the United State in a balanced way					
I think Palestinian media are objective in covering the United States					

I get most of my information about Palestine from newspapers					
I get most of my information about Palestine from television news					
I get most of my information about Palestine from radio					
I get most of my information about Palestine from internet news					
I get most of my information about Palestine from blogs					
I get most of my information about the US from newspapers					
I get most of my information about the US from television news					
I get most of my information about the US from radio					
I get most of my information about the US from internet news					
I get most of my information about the US from blogs					

23) How would you describe your party identification?	
Strong Fatah	
Weak Fatah	
Strong Hamas	
Weak Hamas	
Strong Left	
Weak Left	
Independent ♦ Fatah	
Independent ♦ Hamas	
Independent - Left	
Apolitical (not interested in politics)	
Other (Please Specify):	

24) Where would you place yourself on the liberal-conservative scale?	
Extremely liberal	

Liberal	
Moderate; middle of the road	
Conservative	
Extremely conservative	

25) Did you vote in the last parliamentary elections in 2006?	
Yes	
No	
Don't Remember	

26) How would you describe your level of interest in international politics?	
I am very interested	
I am somewhat interested	
I am not very interested	
I am not interested at all	
Don't know	

27) Which of the following American political figures is considered a strong Democratic candidate for the November 2008 presidential elections?	
Rudi Guiliani	
George W. Bush	
Condoleezza Rice	
Barak Obama	
Bill Clinton	
Don't know	

28) There are 52 states in the United States of America?	
Yes	
No	
Don't know	

29) Who is Nicolas Sarkozy?	
President of France	
President of Belgium	

Chancellor of Germany	
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom	
Secretary General of the United Nations	
Don't know	

30) In what year were you born?

31) What is your gender?	
Male	
Female	

32) You are from a?	
City	
Village	
Refugee Camp	

33) Where do you live?	
Central West Bank (including East Jerusalem)	
Southern West Bank	
Northern West Bank	
Gaza Strip	
Other (Please Specify):	

34) Which of the following represents your highest educational degree?	
High-school	
Bachelor's degree	
Master's degree	
Ph.D. degree	
None of the above	

35) What is your family income level (monthly)?	
None \$999	
\$1,000 - 1,999	

\$2,000 ◆ 2,999	
\$3,000 ◆ 3,999	
\$4,000 ◆ 4,999	
\$5,000 or more	
Don't know	

36) Thank you for answering the questionnaire! You have finished the first stage of your participation in the study. The second stage of the study involves interacting with Palestinian youth through a closed Facebook group for about a month. By clicking the "SUBMIT" button below, you will be re-directed to the Facebook group page. You should request to join the group, and then participate in the group discussions. Thanks again for your participation!

## APPENDIX D Guidelines for Participation

### Guidelines for Participation



[Back to Palestinian–American Youth 2 Youth Interaction](#)

[Discussion Board](#) | [Topic View](#) | [Start New Topic](#)

**Topic: Guidelines for Participation** [Delete Topic](#) | [Reply to Topic](#)

Displaying the only post.



**You wrote**  
on Apr 3, 2008 at 10:45 AM

[Reply to Your Post](#)  
[Delete Post](#)

Post #1

Welcome to the Palestinian–American Youth 2 Youth Interaction. Your participation in this discussion group is highly important and beneficial. Be sure that all the opinions expressed here will be kept anonymous when reporting the results of the study, and will NOT be used in any way for any other purpose, but for the purpose of this study. You should feel free to express your genuine opinion.

**1. PARTICIPATION:**  
You are expected to participate actively in this Facebook group discussion through commenting and contributing to the discussion at least once a week. Participation may include, but is not limited to posting on the group wall, starting up a discussion topic, posting pictures, streaming videos, posting links to articles, websites, or any other material that you think is necessary to make your point, or if you think it would be interesting for your fellow group members to have a look at.

**2. GOOD CONDUCT**  
You are expected to commit to good conduct and behavior through the group discussion. This entails:  
a. Refraining from the use of any insensitive, obscene, offensive, and/or harmful language. By no means does this mean that you should be constrained from expressing your opinion freely and openly;  
b. Maintaining a level of respect to fellow participants;  
c. Avoiding posting any irrelevant, offensive, insensitive, obscene, and/or harmful multimedia content on the discussion group wall; and,  
d. Committing to the confidentiality of the opinions expressed in the discussion group. By no means are the contents, opinions and thoughts of other participants considered public. By accepting to participate in this study, you are committing to NOT copying, sharing, publishing, or any other form of publicizing the other participants' opinions expressed in the group discussion.

**3. YOUR OPINION MATTERS:**  
You are expected to express your genuine opinion and thoughts throughout the discussion in this group. The Facebook group discussion is a platform for free expression of one's opinions and thoughts. You shall not feel constrained, at any time, to express yourself, comment on other participants' ideas, and generate relevant discussion thoughts and topics.

**4. QUESTIONS, REMARKS & COMMENTS**  
If you have any questions, remarks, comments, you can direct them to me at [sa334@mizzou.edu](mailto:sa334@mizzou.edu).

## APPENDIX E Posttest Questionnaires

### Posttest Questionnaire for American Experiment Group

Thank you so much for deciding to take part in the final questionnaire of this study. I would highly appreciate it if you can answer all the questions by expressing your genuine opinion, which should not take more than 30-40 minutes. If you have any questions please contact me: sa334@mizzou.edu; +1(573) 771-0287. Your participation throughout the whole study was of great help to me and my research. Thank you for your time and effort!

1) PLEASE ENTER THE **4-DIGIT CODE** SENT TO YOU BY THE RESEARCHER HERE (i.e. AE##)

2) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Facebook is part of my everyday life					
I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook					
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while					
Facebook has become part of my daily routine					
I feel I am part of the Facebook community					
I would be sorry if Facebook shut down					

3) Based on your involvement with the Facebook Discussion Group for the purpose of this study, Please rate the following statements by expressing whether you agree or disagree with them. Use the scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have been active in the discussion of the Facebook group					
I feel I was engaged in the discussion of the Facebook group					
I participated in the Facebook group by posting comments					
I participated in the Facebook group by reading what the other's wrote					
I felt my opinions and thoughts were welcomed by others					

4) Was there someone you liked from the participants of the Facebook group?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

5) Was there someone you <b><i>did not like</i></b> from the participants of the Facebook group?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

6) Was there anyone from the Facebook Group that <b><i>you have trusted</i></b> (i.e. added them as a friend on Facebook, gave them your personal email address)?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

7) Was there anyone from the Facebook Group that <b><i>has trusted you</i></b> (i.e. added you as a friend on Facebook, gave you their personal email address)?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

8) Did you ask any of the participants from the Facebook Group for <b>help or a favor</b> ?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

9) Has any participant from the facebook group <b>asked you for help or a favor</b> ?	
Yes	
No	

If yes, then who...?	

10) Is there anyone in the Facebook group that <b>you feel you could ask for help or a favor from?</b>	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

11) Did you have <b>any private correspondence</b> with someone from the Facebook group (i.e. exchanged private messages, emails, phone calls, etc...)?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then with whom...?	

12) Is there anyone from the Facebook group that you consider your ' <b>virtual friend</b> '?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

13) Did you <b>discuss any topics other than those in the Facebook group</b> with any of the participants?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then with whom...?	

14) Is there anyone from the Facebook group participants that <b>you would like to have a discussion with about topics other than those of the Facebook group?</b>	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

15) Is there any participant from the Facebook group that <b>you would like to meet in</b>	
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

<b>person?</b>	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

16) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equally plane with others					
I feel that I have a number of good qualities					
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure					
I am able to do things as well as most other people					
I feel I do not have much to be proud of					
I take a positive attitude toward myself					
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself					
In most ways my life is close to my ideal					
The conditions of my life are excellent					
I am satisfied with my life					
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life					
If I could live my time over, I would change almost nothing					

17) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel I am part of my community (school, society, organization, etc)					
I am interested in what goes on in my community					
My community is a good place to be					

I would be willing to contribute money to my community after I start earning money					
Interacting with people from my community makes me want to try new things					
Interacting with people from my community makes me feel like a part of a larger community					
I am willing to spend time to support general activities in my community					
In my community, I come into contact with new people all the time					
Interacting with people at my community reminds me that everyone in the world is connected					
There are several people in my community I trust to solve my problems					
If I needed an emergency loan of \$100, I know someone in my community I can turn to					
There is someone in my community I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions					
The people I interact with in my community would be good job references for me					
I do not know people in my community well enough to get them do anything important					
I'd be able to find out about events in another town from someone in my community					
If I needed to, I could ask an acquaintance in my community to do a small favor for me					
I'd be able to stay with a community acquaintance if traveling to a different city/country					
I'd be able to find information about a job or internship from a community acquaintance					
It would be easy to find people to invite to a community event (reunion, celebration, etc.)					

18) The following statements are related to your experience in the past month of interacting with young Palestinians through the special **Facebook Group** set up for this study. Please, rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel I am part of the Facebook Group					
I am interested in what goes on in the Facebook Group					
The Facebook Group is a good place to be					
I would be willing to contribute money to the Facebook Group after I start earning money					
Interacting with people from the Facebook Group makes me want to try new things					
Interacting with people from the Facebook Group makes me feel like a part of a larger community					
I am willing to spend time to support general activities related the Facebook Group					
In the Facebook Group, I come into contact with new people all the time					
Interacting with people from the Facebook Group reminds me that everyone in the world is connected					
There are several people in Facebook Group I trust to solve my problems					
If I needed an emergency loan of \$100, I know someone in the Facebook Group I can turn to					
There is someone from the Facebook Group I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions					
The people I interact with in the Facebook Group would be good job references for me					
I do not know people in the Facebook Group well enough to get them do anything important					
I'd be able to find out about events in another town from someone from the Facebook Group					
If I needed to, I could ask an acquaintance from the Facebook Group to do a small favor for me					
I'd be able to stay with someone I knew from the Facebook Group a if traveling to a different city/country					
I'd be able to find information about a job or					

internship from someone I knew from the Facebook Group					
It would be easy to find people through the Facebook Group to invite to a community event (reunion, celebration, etc)					

19) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think Palestinians are terrorists					
I think Palestinians are violent					
I think Palestinians do not respect women					
I believe Palestinians have different views of life when compared to Americans					
I think Palestinians are all alike					
I think the goal of Palestinians is to wipe out Israel					
I think Palestinians are innocent					
I think Palestinians are peaceful					
I think Palestinians value life					
I think Palestinians have the right to their independent state					
I believe that Palestinians are still occupied by Israel					
I assume Palestinians are generous					
I believe Palestinians are religious					
I would trust a Palestinian					
I would ask a Palestinian for a small favor					
I think I can be friends with a Palestinian					
I think I can discuss different topics with a Palestinian					
I would like to meet a Palestinian in person					

20) On average, how often do you read a newspaper per week?	
None	

1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

21) Approximately, how much time do you spend reading a newspaper in any given day?	
Less than 5 minutes	
6 <input type="radio"/> 10 minutes	
11 <input type="radio"/> 15 minutes	
16 <input type="radio"/> 20 minutes	
21- 25 minutes	
26 <input type="radio"/> 30 minutes	
More than 30 minutes	

22) On average, how often do you watch television per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

23) Approximately, how much time do you spend watching television in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input type="radio"/> 60 minutes	
1 <input type="radio"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="radio"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="radio"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

24) On average, how often do you listen to the radio per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	

5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

25) Approximately, how much time do you spend listening to the radio on any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input type="radio"/> 60 minutes	
1 <input type="radio"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="radio"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="radio"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

26) On average, how often do you use the internet per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

27) Approximately, how much time do you spend using the internet in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input type="radio"/> 60 minutes	
1 <input type="radio"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="radio"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="radio"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

28) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think the US media cover the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in a balanced way					
I think the US media are objective in covering the Palestinian-Israeli conflict					
I think Palestinian media cover the United					

State in a balanced way					
I think Palestinian media are objective in covering the United States					
I get most of my information about Palestine from newspapers					
I get most of my information about Palestine from television news					
I get most of my information about Palestine from radio					
I get most of my information about Palestine from internet news					
I get most of my information about Palestine from blogs					
I get most of my information about the US from newspapers					
I get most of my information about the US from television news					
I get most of my information about the US from radio					
I get most of my information about the US from internet news					
I get most of my information about the US from blogs					

29) Where would you place yourself on the liberal-conservative scale?	
Extremely liberal	
Liberal	
Moderate; middle of the road	
Conservative	
Extremely conservative	

30) How would you describe your level of interest in international politics?	
I am very interested	
I am somewhat interested	
I am not very interested	
I am not interested at all	
Don't know	

31) Who is the president of the Palestinian National Authority (government)?	
Yassir Arafat	
Isma'il Hanieh	
Mahmoud Abbas	
Salam Fayyad	
Hanan Ashrawi	
Don't know	

32) Is Palestine an independent state?	
Yes	
No	
Don't know	

33) Who is Nicolas Sarkozy?	
President of France	
President of Belgium	
Chancellor of Germany	
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom	
Secretary General of the United Nations	
Don't know	

## Posttest Questionnaire for Palestinian Experiment Group



Thank you so much for deciding to take part in the final questionnaire of this study. I would highly appreciate it if you can answer all the questions by expressing your genuine opinion, which should not take more than 30-40 minutes. If you have any questions please contact me: sa334@mizzou.edu; +1(573) 771-0287. Your participation throughout the whole study was of great help to me and my research. Thank you for your time and effort!

1) PLEASE ENTER THE **4-DIGIT CODE** SENT TO YOU BY THE RESEARCHER HERE (i.e. PE##)

2) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Facebook is part of my everyday life					
I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook					
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while					
Facebook has become part of my daily routine					
I feel I am part of the Facebook community					
I would be sorry if Facebook shut down					

3) Based on your involvement with the Facebook Discussion Group for the purpose of this study, Please rate the following statements by expressing whether you agree or disagree with them. Use the scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have been active in the discussion of the Facebook group					
I feel I was engaged in the discussion of the Facebook group					
I participated in the Facebook group by posting comments					
I participated in the Facebook group by reading what the other's wrote					
I felt my opinions and thoughts were welcomed by others					

4) Was there someone you liked from the participants of the Facebook group?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

5) Was there someone you <b>did not like</b> from the participants of the Facebook group?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

6) Was there anyone from the Facebook Group that <b>you have trusted</b> (i.e. added them as a friend on Facebook, gave them your personal email address)?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

7) Was there anyone from the Facebook Group that <b>has trusted you</b> (i.e. added you as a friend on Facebook, gave you their personal email address)?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

8) Did you ask any of the participants from the Facebook Group for <b>help or a favor</b> ?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

9) Has any participant from the facebook group <b>asked you for help or a favor</b> ?	
Yes	
No	

If yes, then who...?

10) Is there anyone in the Facebook group that <b><i>you feel you could ask for help or a favor from?</i></b>	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

11) Did you have <b><i>any private correspondence</i></b> with someone from the Facebook group (i.e. exchanged private messages, emails, phone calls, etc...)?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then with whom...?	

12) Is there anyone from the Facebook group that you consider your <b><i>'virtual friend'</i></b> ?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

13) Did you <b><i>discuss any topics other than those in the Facebook group</i></b> with any of the participants?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then with whom...?	

14) Is there anyone from the Facebook group participants that <b><i>you would like to have a discussion with about topics other than those of the Facebook group?</i></b>	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

15) Is there any participant from the Facebook group that <b><i>you would like to meet in</i></b>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<b>person?</b>	
Yes	
No	
If yes, then who...?	

16) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equally plane with others					
I feel that I have a number of good qualities					
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure					
I am able to do things as well as most other people					
I feel I do not have much to be proud of					
I take a positive attitude toward myself					
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself					
In most ways my life is close to my ideal					
The conditions of my life are excellent					
I am satisfied with my life					
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life					
If I could live my time over, I would change almost nothing					

17) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel I am part of my community (school, society, organization, etc)					
I am interested in what goes on in my community					
My community is a good place to be					

I would be willing to contribute money to my community after I start earning money					
Interacting with people from my community makes me want to try new things					
Interacting with people from my community makes me feel like a part of a larger community					
I am willing to spend time to support general activities in my community					
In my community, I come into contact with new people all the time					
Interacting with people at my community reminds me that everyone in the world is connected					
There are several people in my community I trust to solve my problems					
If I needed an emergency loan of \$100, I know someone in my community I can turn to					
There is someone in my community I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions					
The people I interact with in my community would be good job references for me					
I do not know people in my community well enough to get them do anything important					
I'd be able to find out about events in another town from someone in my community					
If I needed to, I could ask an acquaintance in my community to do a small favor for me					
I'd be able to stay with a community acquaintance if traveling to a different city/country					
I'd be able to find information about a job or internship from a community acquaintance					
It would be easy to find people to invite to a community event (reunion, celebration, etc.)					

18) The following statements are related to your experience in the past month of interacting with young Americans through the special **Facebook Group** set up for this study. Please, rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel I am part of the Facebook Group					
I am interested in what goes on in the Facebook Group					
The Facebook Group is a good place to be					
I would be willing to contribute money to the Facebook Group after I start earning money					
Interacting with people from the Facebook Group makes me want to try new things					
Interacting with people from the Facebook Group makes me feel like a part of a larger community					
I am willing to spend time to support general activities related the Facebook Group					
In the Facebook Group, I come into contact with new people all the time					
Interacting with people from the Facebook Group reminds me that everyone in the world is connected					
There are several people from the Facebook Group I trust to solve my problems					
If I needed an emergency loan of \$100, I know someone in the Facebook Group I can turn to					
There is someone from the Facebook Group I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions					
The people I interact with in the Facebook Group would be good job references for me					
I do not know people in the Facebook Group well enough to get them do anything important					
I'd be able to find out about events in another town from someone from the Facebook Group					
If I needed to, I could ask an acquaintance in Facebook Group to do a small favor for me					
I'd be able to stay with someone I knew from the Facebook Group a if traveling to a different city/country					
I'd be able to find information about a job or internship from someone I knew from the					

Facebook Group					
It would be easy to find people through the Facebook Group to invite to a community event (reunion, celebration, etc)					

19) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think Americans are terrorists					
I think Americans are violent					
I think Americans do not respect women					
I believe Americans have different views of life when compared to Palestinians					
I think Americans are all alike					
I think the goal of U.S. is to wipe out Iraq					
I think Americans are innocent					
I think Americans are peaceful					
I think Americans value life					
I think Americans support Israel more than the Palestinians					
I believe that Americans are still occupying Iraq					
I assume Americans are generous					
I believe Americans are religious					
I would trust an American					
I would ask an American for a small favor					
I think I can be friends with an American					
I think I can discuss different topics with an American					
I would like to meet an American in person					

20) On average, how often do you read a newspaper per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	

5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

21) Approximately, how much time do you spend reading a newspaper in any given day?	
Less than 5 minutes	
6 <input type="radio"/> 10 minutes	
11 <input type="radio"/> 15 minutes	
16 <input type="radio"/> 20 minutes	
21- 25 minutes	
26 <input type="radio"/> 30 minutes	
More than 30 minutes	

22) On average, how often do you watch television per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

23) Approximately, how much time do you spend watching television in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input type="radio"/> 60 minutes	
1 <input type="radio"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="radio"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="radio"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

24) On average, how often do you listen to the radio per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

25) Approximately, how much time do you spend listening to the radio on any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 ⚡ 60 minutes	
1 ⚡ 2 hours	
2 ⚡ 3 hours	
3 ⚡ 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

26) On average, how often do you use the internet per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

27) Approximately, how much time do you spend using the internet in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 ⚡ 60 minutes	
1 ⚡ 2 hours	
2 ⚡ 3 hours	
3 ⚡ 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

28) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think the US media cover the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in a balanced way					
I think the US media are objective in covering the Palestinian-Israeli conflict					
I think Palestinian media cover the United State in a balanced way					
I think Palestinian media are objective in					

covering the United States					
I get most of my information about Palestine from newspapers					
I get most of my information about Palestine from television news					
I get most of my information about Palestine from radio					
I get most of my information about Palestine from internet news					
I get most of my information about Palestine from blogs					
I get most of my information about the US from newspapers					
I get most of my information about the US from television news					
I get most of my information about the US from radio					
I get most of my information about the US from internet news					
I get most of my information about the US from blogs					

29) Where would you place yourself on the liberal-conservative scale?	
Extremely liberal	
Liberal	
Moderate; middle of the road	
Conservative	
Extremely conservative	

30) How would you describe your level of interest in international politics?	
I am very interested	
I am somewhat interested	
I am not very interested	
I am not interested at all	
Don't know	

31) Which of the following American political figures is considered a strong Democratic
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

candidate for the November 2008 presidential elections?	
Rudi Guiliani	
George W. Bush	
Condoleeza Rice	
Barack Obama	
Bill Clinton	
Don't know	

32) There are 52 states in the United States of America	
Yes	
No	
Don't know	

33) Who is Nicolas Sarkozy?	
President of France	
President of Belgium	
Chancellor of Germany	
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom	
Secretary General of the United Nations	
Don't know	

## Posttest Questionnaire for American Control Group

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Thank you so much for deciding to take part in the final questionnaire of this study. I would highly appreciate it if you can answer all the questions by expressing your genuine opinion, which should not take more than 30-40 minutes. If you have any questions please contact me: sa334@mizzou.edu; +1(573) 771-0287. Your participation throughout the whole study was of great help to me and my research. Thank you for your time and effort!

1) PLEASE ENTER THE **4-DIGIT CODE** SENT TO YOU BY THE RESEARCHER HERE (i.e. AC##)

2) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Facebook is part of my everyday life					
I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook					
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while					
Facebook has become part of my daily routine					
I feel I am part of the Facebook community					
I would be sorry if Facebook shut down					

3) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equally plane with others					
I feel that I have a number of good qualities					
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure					
I am able to do things as well as most other people					
I feel I do not have much to be proud of					

I take a positive attitude toward myself					
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself					
In most ways my life is close to my ideal					
The conditions of my life are excellent					
I am satisfied with my life					
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life					
If I could live my time over, I would change almost nothing					

4) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel I am part of my community (school, society, organization, etc)					
I am interested in what goes on in my community					
My community is a good place to be					
I would be willing to contribute money to my community after I start earning money					
Interacting with people from my community makes me want to try new things					
Interacting with people from my community makes me feel like a part of a larger community					
I am willing to spend time to support general activities in my community					
In my community, I come into contact with new people all the time					
Interacting with people at my community reminds me that everyone in the world is connected					
There are several people in my community I trust to solve my problems					
If I needed an emergency loan of \$100, I know someone in my community I can turn to					
There is someone in my community I can turn to for advice about making very important					

decisions					
The people I interact with in my community would be good job references for me					
I do not know people in my community well enough to get them do anything important					
I'd be able to find out about events in another town from someone in my community					
If I needed to, I could ask an acquaintance in my community to do a small favor for me					
I'd be able to stay with a community acquaintance if traveling to a different city/country					
I'd be able to find information about a job or internship from a community acquaintance					
It would be easy to find people to invite to a community event (reunion, celebration, etc)					

5) Have you ever visited the Holy Land (Palestine/Israel)?	
Yes	
No	

6) If yes, how many times?

7) Have you ever interacted with one or more Palestinians? (Check all that apply)	
I have never interacted (met face-to-face, communicated) with any Palestinians	
I have met a Palestinian face-to-face	
I have one or more Palestinian friends	
I have exchanged letters with one or more Palestinians	
I have chatted with one or more Palestinians	
I have exchanged messages on Facebook with one or more Palestinians	
I have communicated with one or more Palestinians through emails	
I have communicated with one or more Palestinians through blogs	
Other (Please Specify):	

8) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree;
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think Palestinians are terrorists					
I think Palestinians are violent					
I think Palestinians do not respect women					
I believe Palestinians have different views of life when compared to Americans					
I think Palestinians are all alike					
I think the goal of Palestinians is to wipe out Israel					
I think Palestinians are innocent					
I think Palestinians are peaceful					
I think Palestinians value life					
I think Palestinians have a right to their independent state					
I know Palestinians are still occupied by the Israelis					
I assume Palestinians are generous					
I believe Palestinians are religious					
I would trust a Palestinian					
I would ask a Palestinian for a small favor					
I think I can be friends with a Palestinian					
I think I can discuss different topics with a Palestinian					
I would like to meet a Palestinian in person					

9) On average, how often do you read a newspaper per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

10) Approximately, how much time do you spend reading a newspaper in any given day?	

Less than 5 minutes	
6 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 10 minutes	
11 <input type="radio"/> 15 minutes	
16 <input type="radio"/> 20 minutes	
21- 25 minutes	
26 <input type="radio"/> 30 minutes	
More than 30 minutes	

11) On average, how often do you watch television per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

12) Approximately, how much time do you spend watching television in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 60 minutes	
1 <input type="radio"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="radio"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="radio"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

13) On average, how often do you listen to the radio per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

14) Approximately, how much time do you spend listening to the radio on any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 60 minutes	

1 <input type="radio"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="radio"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="radio"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

15) On average, how often do you use the internet per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

16) Approximately, how much time do you spend using the internet in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input type="radio"/> 60 minutes	
1 <input type="radio"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="radio"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="radio"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

17) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think the US media cover the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in a balanced way					
I think the US media are objective in covering the Palestinian-Israeli conflict					
I think Palestinian media cover the United State in a balanced way					
I think Palestinian media are objective in covering the United States					
I get most of my information about Palestine from newspapers					
I get most of my information about Palestine from television news					

I get most of my information about Palestine from radio					
I get most of my information about Palestine from internet news					
I get most of my information about Palestine from blogs					
I get most of my information about the US from newspapers					
I get most of my information about the US from television news					
I get most of my information about the US from radio					
I get most of my information about the US from internet news					
I get most of my information about the US from blogs					

18) How would you describe your level of interest in international politics?	
I am very interested	
I am somewhat interested	
I am not very interested	
I am not interested at all	
Don't know	

19) Who is the president of the Palestinian National Authority (government)?	
Yassir Arafat	
Isma'il Hanieh	
Mahmoud Abbas	
Salam Fayyad	
Hanan Ashrawi	
Don't know	

20) Is Palestine an independent state?	
Yes	
No	
Don't know	

21) Who is Nicolas Sarkozy?	
President of France	
President of Belgium	
Chancellor of Germany	
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom	
Secretary General of the United Nations	
Don't know	

## Posttest Questionnaire for Palestinian Control Group

Thank you so much for deciding to take part in the final questionnaire of this study. I would highly appreciate it if you can answer all the questions by expressing your genuine opinion, which should not take more than 30-40 minutes. If you have any questions please contact me: sa334@mizzou.edu; +1(573) 771-0287. Your participation throughout the whole study was of great help to me and my research. Thank you for your time and effort!

1) PLEASE ENTER THE **4-DIGIT CODE** SENT TO YOU BY THE RESEARCHER HERE (i.e. PC##)

2) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Facebook is part of my everyday life					
I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook					
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while					
Facebook has become part of my daily routine					
I feel I am part of the Facebook community					
I would be sorry if Facebook shut down					

3) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equally plane with others					
I feel that I have a number of good qualities					
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure					
I am able to do things as well as most other people					
I feel I do not have much to be proud of					

I take a positive attitude toward myself					
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself					
In most ways my life is close to my ideal					
The conditions of my life are excellent					
I am satisfied with my life					
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life					
If could live my time over, I would change almost nothing					

4) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)

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I feel I am part of my community (school, society, organization, etc)					
I am interested in what goes on in my community					
My community is a good place to be					
I would be willing to contribute money to my community after I start earning money					
Interacting with people from my community makes me want to try new things					
Interacting with people from my community makes me feel like a part of a larger community					
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Interacting with people at my community reminds me that everyone in the world is connected					
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decisions					
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I'd be able to find information about a job or internship from a community acquaintance					
It would be easy to find people to invite to a community event (reunion, celebration, etc)					

5) Have you ever visited the United State of America?	
Yes	
No	

6) If yes, how many times?

7) Have you ever interacted with one or more Americans? (Please check all that apply)	
I have never interacted (met face-to-face, communicated) with any Americans	
I have met an American face-to-face	
I have one or more American friends	
I have exchanged letters with one or more Americans	
I have chatted with one or more Americans	
I have exchanged messages on Facebook with one or more Americans	
I have communicated with one or more Americans through emails	
I have communicated with one or more Americans through blogs	
Other (Please Specify):	

8) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree;
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think Americans are terrorists					
I think Americans are violent					
I think Americans do not respect women					
I believe Americans have different views of life when compared to Palestinians					
I think Americans are all alike					
I think the goal of Americans is to wipe out Iraq					
I think Americans are innocent					
I think Americans are peaceful					
I think Americans value life					
I think Americans support Israel more than the Palestinians					
I believe that Americans are still occupying Iraq					
I assume Americans are generous					
I believe Americans are religious					
I would trust an American					
I would ask an American for a small favor					
I think I can be friends with An American					
I think I can discuss different topics with an American					
I would like to meet an American in person					

9) On average, how often do you read a newspaper per week?	
None	
1-2 days/week	
3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

10) Approximately, how much time do you spend reading a newspaper in any given day?	

Less than 5 minutes	
6 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 minutes	
11 <input type="checkbox"/> 15 minutes	
16 <input type="checkbox"/> 20 minutes	
21- 25 minutes	
26 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 minutes	
More than 30 minutes	

11) On average, how often do you watch television per week?	
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3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

12) Approximately, how much time do you spend watching television in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input type="checkbox"/> 60 minutes	
1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

13) On average, how often do you listen to the radio per week?	
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1 <input type="radio"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="radio"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="radio"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

15) On average, how often do you use the internet per week?	
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3-4 days/week	
5-6 days/week	
7 days/week	

16) Approximately, how much time do you spend using the internet in any given day?	
Less than 30 minutes	
31 <input type="radio"/> 60 minutes	
1 <input type="radio"/> 2 hours	
2 <input type="radio"/> 3 hours	
3 <input type="radio"/> 4 hours	
More than 4 hours	

17) Rate the following statements as to whether you agree or disagree with them, using the appointed scale (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral (No Opinion/Not Applicable); Agree; and Strongly Agree)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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I think Palestinian media cover the United State in a balanced way					
I think Palestinian media are objective in covering the United States					
I get most of my information about Palestine from newspapers					
I get most of my information about Palestine from television news					

I get most of my information about Palestine from radio					
I get most of my information about Palestine from internet news					
I get most of my information about Palestine from blogs					
I get most of my information about the US from newspapers					
I get most of my information about the US from television news					
I get most of my information about the US from radio					
I get most of my information about the US from internet news					
I get most of my information about the US from blogs					

18) How would you describe your level of interest in international politics?	
I am very interested	
I am somewhat interested	
I am not very interested	
I am not interested at all	
Don't know	

19) Which of the following American political figures is considered a strong Democratic candidate for the November 2008 presidential elections?	
Rudi Guiliani	
George W. Bush	
Condoleezza Rice	
Barak Obama	
Bill Clinton	
Don't know	

20) There are 52 states in the United States of America?	
Yes	
No	
Don't know	

21) Who is Nicolas Sarkozy?	
President of France	
President of Belgium	
Chancellor of Germany	
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom	
Secretary General of the United Nations	
Don't know	

## APPENDIX F Facebook Group Discussion

### Facebook Group Wall Posts

#### Palestinian-American Youth 2 Youth Interaction's Wall



[Back to Palestinian-American Youth 2 Youth Interaction](#)

Displaying posts 1 – 20 of 56.

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [Next](#)

Write something...

Post

 (Palestine) wrote  
at 10:16am on May 4th, 2008

hey everyone ... i am  from Palestine... it has been so long since i wrote the last thing >>> but what i heard later in news motivate me strongly to write again even if it is the last day ... i was wondering if u heard about" Goarge Bush ' visit to the Middle East in the same time that "ISRAEL" is celebrating its 60th year since it was existed in 1948 >>> most the news ASSERT that the President is coming NOT for discussing the rising situation in Middle East but to attend the Jewish Festivals >>> So what do u think about this??? especially that the elections are getting closer ??? and What is the American's Media say about this event which we call in Palestine the "DISASTER"??? Does it mention any thing about it ??? and in contrast what about the ISRAELI celebrations ????? please i am so interested to know these things >> this is the CORE of our case... thnx

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 (Washington, DC) wrote  
at 10:31am on April 25th, 2008

Breaking News:  
US contracted ship fired toward an Iranian vessel. So far it seems only Reuters, FOX News and MSNBC have picked up the story. Very few details so far.

I have found it interesting though that no Middle Eastern publication that I have looked at has anything about this.

[Report](#) - [Delete](#)

 wrote  
at 5:35pm on April 24th, 2008

Oh, and I didn't mean to sound like you should only post things you feel are representative of your country, any comments/ideas are welcome!

[Report](#) - [Delete](#)

 wrote  
at 5:29pm on April 24th, 2008

While I think all the posts about politics should also continue, I'd like to discuss daily life, music, food, cultural norms etc. in Palestine and America. I'm sure there are unique differences for both countries as well as surprising similarities.

I think a good way to get a good picture of life in another country is to talk about daily issues that all of us deal with, rather than only discussing the extremes that certain people in our countries are facing. In overcoming stereotypes, I think starting with understanding culture and daily life is important. Does anyone from either country especially like music, certain types of food, pop culture, movies or want to discuss cultural norms?

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██████████ wrote  
at 5:29pm on April 24th, 2008

██████████ wrote in one post: "we are not generally exposed to the living conditions of the Palestinians. We are just exposed to the tidbits of information from the media, but they rarely take the time to really explain the situation," and Saleem asked in his message: What could be done to change the perceived images and stereotypes on both sides?

In regards to being exposed to living conditions etc., I think discussing these sorts of issues would help bring us to more of a realistic (and less stereotypical view) of each other's countries. Specifically what I mean is that instead of getting a feel for a country based on how the media covers that country and based on looking at that country's government, why not just talk more about each other's daily lives and culture. Because I know I don't define myself simply as an American who's government is at war in Iraq. Furthermore, discussing issues like culture is part of the purpose of this facebook group.

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██████████ wrote  
at 5:28pm on April 24th, 2008

So out of curiosity, how much do Palestinians care about the U.S. presidential election in November? Are there preferences? If so, why?  
I admit to having a sadly narrowed focus of the world, and I'm wondering if that's an American trait of mine, or just am "I'm lazy" trait. (Or both, haha.)

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██████████ wrote  
at 10:08am on April 21st, 2008

sorry about the grammatical mistakes. slightly tired but thought i should contribute after the two emails that saleem sent.

[Report](#) - [Delete](#)

---

██████████ wrote  
at 10:07am on April 21st, 2008

This is sort of a tangential comment but I've noticed is that many Palestinian-Americans go home and see the conditions their relatives live in and when they come back they realize that most Americans either don't know or don't want to know so they get bitter, which to some extent they have every right. People are suffering and yet they are continually vilified. I had to explain to an 8 year old Palestinian who got a bullet in his shoe because his uncle told him to run home when they got stopped by Israeli soldiers that not all Jews were bad. It was really hard and I don't know if the message stuck especially compared to a bullet through the sole of his sneakers. I think of this when I hear my friends talk about their Birthright experience and its so hard to bridge the wide gap between the two.

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---

██████████ (Washington, DC) wrote  
at 8:56am on April 21st, 2008

Americans do receive most of our information about the situation of the Palestinians and Israelis from teh media., unless someone chooses to actively go out and seek deeper perspective, such as looking at blogs and reading international newspapers. One problem with this is the media can lead to stereotyping, especially in a situation like this. Most Americans do not have personal experiences with Palestinians. And the conflict and culture is so deep and complex that the media cannot fully discuss it at leangth to give their audience the full scope of the situation. Therefore, Americans are lead to belive that all Palestinians have the same view. Or often, that all Arabs have the same view, therefore not distinguishing between the cultures. Many believe most or all Arabs can be violent, destest Americans and our culture, and are radically religious. This isn't always the case, but the media often lumps the actions of the culture together.

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 ██████████ wrote

at 1:50pm on April 19th, 2008

In response to Osama's question – no we are not generally exposed to the living conditions of the Palestinians. We are just exposed to the tidbits of information from the media, but they rarely take the time to really explain the situation. I really like what you said about being taken hostage by the Hamas, but it seems that this is something most Americans don't really understand (and the American media doesn't really distinguish). Correct me if I am wrong, but I think that most Palestinians and Israelis are in this same situation – taken "hostage" by small, radical groups (or large, radical governments) and forced to live in the conflict that they really want no part of. Is this the general feeling, or am I totally of base with Palestinian sentiment? Hmm... perhaps that's the word we really need for this situation... hostage crisis. But maybe it, too, would eventually come to mean nothing to us.

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wrote  
at 1:28pm on April 19th, 2008

I can't say I'm all that optimistic either (as you can see from my previous posts, I'm just a bit cynical!). However, I think it is very true that most people have no idea what is REALLY going on in Palestine. They have "a vague idea of some sort of conflict thing that is going on for some reason." I agree with Uthayla that this has been going on for so long that the media doesn't find it necessary to really explain the whole issue anymore – it's just old news to them. Not that this is an excuse. What we really need is a word to describe the situation other than "occupation." People have become desensitized to this word – it no longer has any real meaning.

[Report](#) – [Delete](#)

(Washington, DC) wrote  
at 10:48am on April 17th, 2008

I agree with you completely...I was once a typical Jewish American who supported Israel and was brought up with those exact ideas. However, not so much that Palestinians were bad but just more so with the idea that Israel is good and necessary for the Jewish people. However, once I went there and lived and worked in both the Israeli and Palestinian community I was able to see what was really going on there. I think more Jewish-Americans (and Americans in general) need to visit (and not just on birthright which gives a horribly untrue look at Israel). A friend of mine, also Jewish, was just there on an Interfaith Peace-Builders trip and among other things wrote the following: "I must say that I do take some calm in that most people in the U.S., Jews included, truly have no idea what the occupation entails. For if they did, I truly believe with all of my heart and soul that the occupation would end!" I do hope this is true...I cant say I'm as optimistic as she is!

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wrote  
at 7:35am on April 17th, 2008

I have two responses. As for the US media's coverage of the situation in Gaza, no there really isn't much coverage. Part of it, I think, is that since the situation hasn't dramatically changed (it has been bad and continues to worsen incrementally,) it isn't considered news. My second response is about Jewish Americans. My undergrad university had a very active range of Jewish organizations. I found that American defenders of Israel tend to have an emotional argument for their unconditional support. It is a very black and white issue: Palestinians are bad and Israel is good. The Israelis I've met, on the other hand, because they experience the day to day reality of Israel, have a better understanding of the nuances of the situation. I stumbled across this article yesterday and thought it was interesting and relevant to this discussion:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7349371.stm>

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wrote  
at 8:42pm on April 16th, 2008

In response to the car being converted: I haven't heard anything about that in the media. Maybe I just missed it but I hadn't heard anything about that before. I take for granted being able to get gas anywhere and anytime that I want to.

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██████████ (Palestine) wrote  
at 3:58am on April 15th, 2008

Hi to all, I have posted a photo of my car after being converted from Gazoline into cooking Gas due to the siege imposed on Gaza by the Israeli side, and now I can't even use the Gas, because the Gas also was banned by the Israeli authorities!!! The question to my American friends participating in this group: Do the media show such harsh living conditions, and do you even know about the siege imposed on Gaza since more than 10 months?? If anyone say that this siege because of HAMAS radical movement, I will answer: the only victims of such siege is the normal citizens living in Gaza, and HAMAS leaders do not even feel of the siege, where every thing is offered for them, and personally I believe that we "GAZANS" were taken hostage by HAMAS, so we shouldn't be punished by the world in addition.

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██████████ (Washington, DC) wrote  
at 10:22am on April 13th, 2008

If you want some inspiration from the Israeli side, I would suggest looking at organizations such as New Profile, Zochrot, Anarchists Against the Wall, Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, or watch the movie Bil'in Habibti (made by an Israeli activist). Its still small numbers but still, I think it is important to know that Israelis (and Americans) are really taking steps to do what they think is necessary to try and end the occupation.

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██████████ (Washington, DC) wrote  
at 10:21am on April 13th, 2008

I also think your point about Israeli civilians. It's funny, growing up in a Jewish-American community I think I was taught to be more supportive of the Israeli government than Israeli civilians themselves are. I soon realized that and discovered why it is so important to actually be critical of it instead, like many Israelis. As Americans we can all understand how frustrating it is to disagree with your government and really feel you have no way to change that. I think Israelis are beginning to try and find ways, the number of civilians that refuse to serve in the Israeli Army is rising every year, and growing numbers of Israelis have really begun to work in solidarity with Palestinians to protest and fight this occupation.

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██████████ (Washington, DC) wrote  
at 10:18am on April 13th, 2008

LN, I agree with so much of what you say. The Israeli government and many of its citizens have internalized fears stemming from the Holocaust so much that they feel a need to protect themselves to the highest extent. By doing so...emulating may of the vary things committed against them. This is something a lot of people are afraid to say because even people in the US have internalized fear from the Holocaust so far that relating what is going on in Palestine with it is considered anti-Semitism. I, on the other hand, from living there and seeing much of the mentality just see it as the truth.

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██████████ wrote  
at 8:28pm on April 12th, 2008

In response to the Israelis killing Palestinians - I think we can all agree that it's wrong. There is no doubt in my mind (even with the little I know of the conflict) that Israel is now perpetrating the same crimes that were so wrongfully committed against their people in WWII and beyond. However, instead of learning from all the horrific things they have been through, they turn around and begin the systematic destruction of Palestine. This is something I don't understand. I can't even comprehend it. I think that's part of the problem in general. We as American's don't understand the occupation, but we don't understand the Palestinian reaction to it either (suicide bombs). I can't help thinking that perhaps the Israeli civilians are very much like American civilians - fed up with government actions, but completely at a loss as to how to stop it. Also, I want to clarify that when I wrote "sheer idiocy" below, I was referring to the American government's invasion.

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 wrote  
at 8:18pm on April 12th, 2008

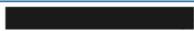
In response to the comment about a change in President, perhaps it would be helpful to explain the sense of helplessness I have in regards to American government. There is such division among Americans as we fall in line behind our respective candidates, and yet we all know that deep down, the candidates are all the same. I think I speak for a large majority of Americans when I say that we are all sick of the wars in the middle east (and some of us were horrified from the very beginning, sitting in our dorm rooms in 2002, unable to speak from the overwhelming feeling that the whole thing was sheer idiocy), sick of the politics involved in where the US invades "for the democracy of the people," and sick of our own attitudes of apathy toward things like Israeli/Palestinian conflict (and others like the genocide going on in Africa). We sit in our safe little houses, reading about the horror elsewhere, and we think "I should do something about that..."  
And then we get distracted...

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Write something...

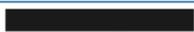
Post

  (American University of Sharjah) wrote  
at 5:28pm on April 12th, 2008

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Israel is Killing Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank and demolishing houses using the money Americans pay in the form of taxes. The US is willing to do more things in favor of Israel even if it creates hate to the US and its people all around the glob. Unfortunately that's how I perceive the United States after all these wars its conducting and its policies against anything in the benefit of Palestinians.

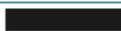
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  (American University of Sharjah) wrote  
at 5:20pm on April 12th, 2008

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As  and  mentioned, we all hope that the American Media and policy makers will change the way they deal with the Israeli-Palestinian- conflict. The problem is in the strong Zionist lobby in the US. In response to Saleem's' question on the discussion board about the Palestinian opinion about the Americans, when I was a small kid, I had the dream of visiting the "country of freedom and innovation". However, now things and thoughts are totally different. American reminds me of the weapons that are being used against my people everyday. It reminds me of more than 45 times Vetoes on condemnation of Israel. It reminds me of the ultimate technological and economical support of Israel. I believe the American people should put more efforts to influence the media and decision makers in DC. What the US government is doing around the world is not only affecting us but Americans as well.

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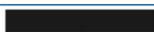
  (Washington, DC) wrote  
at 1:20pm on April 12th, 2008

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 I am hopeful as well that perhaps a change in Presidents will lead to a change in policy. Unfortunately, I think the Zionist Lobby and the fear of being looked at as anti-Semitic has been ingrained in American citizens and in so much of US policy that any change may only be very very small.

I think until more awareness, as to what is really occurring in Palestine, is brought to the US audience it really will be hard to make any larger change. At this point, as Medhat stated, the US has become almost another party IN this conflict. As someone that is finishing up her master's in Conflict Resolution, I've learned a lot about the difference between primary parties and third party actors. From what I see the US doing to support Israel's military occupation (through monetary and veto support) I can't call America a third (outside) party. I think more Americans really need to be aware of just how much this support plays in the continuation of the occupation of Palestine.

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  (Palestine) wrote  
at 1:09pm on April 12th, 2008

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hello,

I [redacted] of Jerusalem, I want to inform you that many Americans do not reach their full truth of what is happening in Palestine, because the American media is the heart of the facts victim becomes a killer, and the killer becomes a victim...  
Moreover, the American media is supportive of Israel, as Bush's policy, and I expect upon receipt Obama situation will change ....  
This is what I hope

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[redacted] (Utrecht) wrote  
at 7:47am on April 12th, 2008

american policy makers in D.C

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[redacted] (Utrecht) wrote  
at 7:47am on April 12th, 2008

Although i agree with [redacted] on several things, however, to state that Saddam |Hussien was not a tyrant is simply ridiculous. Saddam Hussien not only used chemicakl weapons aganist the Kurds and not only had many many prisions around the world, not only acted with force and in immoral manner, he also assassinated his fellow party members to ensure his power remains. He killed women, childern, youth, elderly and a wide variety of Iraqis. He is a savage as the americans are at this point. Yes indeed Iraq had a good economy for a while but then on american orders he took the iraqis to a 9 year war with Iran and invaded Kuwait leading to crubbling of economy and the death of a million iraqis. So although i agree that the americans had no right to invade and have as much to balme in there policy as Saddam.

I know we palestinians tend to like saddam because like every arab government he used the palestinian-Israeli conflict and rehtoric to remain in power.

Saddam is a monster so is the

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[redacted] (Palestine) wrote  
at 10:04am on April 11th, 2008

hey becky, very interesting u mentioned the american calims for the iraqi war... when it all started with the wepons of mass destruction, then it showed it wasnt true... so they decided to change the excuse into "spreading democracy into iraq"... and then see whats going on now in iraq, i dont know if the american media is covering the iraqi war as good and as obvective as they cover the palestine-israel struggle, but u should know how many ppl die in iraq, where "mission was accomplished"... iraqi deaths 90,251... and american deaths 2600, with estimated 100,000 wounded!

... so what ever the americans were doing in iraq, its definitely not to spread democracy, and for peace for the iraqi ppl... it should be mentioned here and now, the Iraq lived its quietest, most peaceful, and biggest economic growth was during the Saddam Hussein reign, and he definitely was the best and msot fit leader to lead Iraq... and it was not a tyranny by any means.

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[redacted] wrote  
at 11:29am on April 10th, 2008

[redacted] I guess we are going to have to agree to disagree on the statement that one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist because you said that; "For you forgot the simple humane historical fact, the occupiers are terrorists, and the occupied are freedom fighters. And there is a clear cut between them.. nothing hazy in trying to figure out who occupied who."

When the war in Iraq first began the US government would go around saying that we were fighting for freedom, for the right of these other countries to chose to live by a democracy. So I believe that there are (or were at that time) a large number of Americans citizens who believe (believed) that the US soliders were acting as freedom fighters and that the Iraqi government suppressing their peoples' rights could be considered as terrorist. Especially since their leader, Saddam Hussein was listed on the terrorist watch group. (yes i know the US put Saddam in power but that is a completely different discussion).

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██████████ (Palestine) wrote  
at 4:34am on April 10th, 2008

hi nathan, i would like to clarify i did not refer to the whole nation as ignorant, its just the stereotype a person gets about another people, a stereotype by definition is hasty generalization...

second of all, just refering to the historical facts listed under Palestine/Israeli conflict in an encyclopedia is definitely no good citation.

Are u saying there is no american influence in the Palestine/Israel conflict!? do u know how much money goes to Israel from the US as grants?!... its more than 100 billion US\$, (12 zeros)... do u know how much it costs the taxpayers in US? Total Cost to U.S. Taxpayers \$134,791,507,200!... \* thats other than the military and weapon assistance, and the political support!... why is israel the only country VITO'ed by the US to be the only country in hte Middle East to have nuclear weapon? ...i will leave the rest for u to wonder about.  
\*[http://www.wrmea.com/html/us\\_aid\\_to\\_israel.htm](http://www.wrmea.com/html/us_aid_to_israel.htm)

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██████████ wrote  
at 10:40pm on April 9th, 2008

I wouldn't suggest starting an argument by boldly suggesting an entire nation is ignorant. That's just being... what's the word? Besides, I looked into this whole Palestinian/Israeli conflict and I didn't find any "American influence." Looks to me like it started with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after WWI. How can you be upset with America for stopping those land-hungry Germans? Furthermore, America and the United Nations have tried several times to mediate a peaceful resolution, notably Bill Clinton's attempt in 2000. So, I can fervently say America does not want a continuation of this conflict.

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██████████ (Palestine) wrote  
at 7:16am on April 9th, 2008

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4531457358374474428&q=peace+war+and+the+promised+land&total=102&start=0&num=10&so=0&type=search&plindex=0>

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██████████ (Palestine) wrote  
at 6:55am on April 9th, 2008

So although it's a very interesting quote you gave ██████████, "one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist", but it is definitely not true. For you forgot the simple humane historical fact, the occupiers are terrorists, and the occupied are freedom fighters. And there is a clear cut between them.. nothing hazy in trying to figure out who occupied who.

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██████████ (Palestine) wrote  
at 6:55am on April 9th, 2008

As you can see from news, and from movies where the American soldiers, who are OCCUPIERS are the heroes, against the OCCUPIED "freedom fighters" who appear to be the terrorist rebels. When did this manipulation happen?... when were the occupiers praised for their actions? And the occupied dishonoured for their call for freedom?

The American media hides the truth from the American people, and it involves its people in a scandal of deceitfulness against the world. Given that the biggest news corporation in the US, FOX and the News Corporation are very strong supporters of the US government, and involved in hiding the truth about the Palestine, about Iraq war, and many others, from the American people.

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██████████ (Palestine) wrote  
at 6:54am on April 9th, 2008

hi guys,  
well, just a thought to share with you about the American Media.

It is a fact that the American media is biased, and it is a fact that the American people are ignorant to what happens elsewhere in the world, whether Palestine/Israel, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo... etc. most of these conflicts going on in the World –and esp. in the Middle East– are American–caused and/or influenced.

Throughout the recent years, the US government and TV has been changing many ideas and facts.

One of which is the substitution of the term “Freedom Fighters” with “Terrorists”. Freedom Fighters throughout history have been praised for their sacrifices and their acts in favour of their country, their people, and their freedom. This has changed. The term freedom fighters has been replaced by more harsh and savage terms, referring to them as terrorists, and as radical rebels. ...(to be continued)

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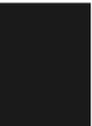
 (Washington, DC) wrote  
at 10:39am on April 8th, 2008

Nathan, it's interesting that you suggest Promises as a movie to watch. To me, it's sort of a depressing ending. The movie I would suggest everyone watching is "Encounter Point". It is a wonderful movie about nonviolent Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilders. You can Netflix it, I believe. If you DO rent it, watch the extras. There is one man interviewed that to me exemplifies strength, when it comes to loosing family members and learning a true lesson from it.

Also, the organization that created the movie, Just Vision, has a great website with profile and interviews of many amazing people working towards a just peace in Israel/Palestine. ([www.justvision.org](http://www.justvision.org))

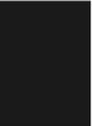
PS I dont work for the organization, really...

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 wrote  
at 7:26pm on April 7th, 2008

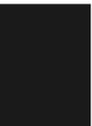
Perhaps everyone should rent the movie PROMISES. It is a documentary that takes some Israeli kids and some Palestinian kids and lets them enter into a dialog. The children are willing, some eager, to meet each other and talk about the conflict between their nations. You can watch it instantly on Netflix.... hint hint

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 wrote  
at 11:43pm on April 6th, 2008

i got cut off, I wanted to leave y'all with my favourite quote; "One man's freedom fighter, is another mind's terrorist." i think this perfectly sums up what I was trying to get at.

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 wrote  
at 11:42pm on April 6th, 2008

As a Jewish American who has been to Israel I feel I have a fairly open minded view and understanding of the conflict. I believe that most Palestinians are average people, making do with what they have and trying to make themselves the best they can be. Just like American youth counterparts are doing. We are trying to find our own identities with in the boundaries imposed on us by our countries stereotypes.

There are just as many 'bad apples' in the US as their are in Palestine. I think the main reason that the extremists in Palestine get more coverage in the media than the extremists in Israel is because it's two distinct cultures fighting an old feud over land. While American extremists (for example; the Oklahoma City Bombers and all the many school shootings) are making a political statement against their own country. Not all Palestinians are extremists and not all Americans attempt to influence others that their beliefs are the only way to live.

One of my all time favorite quo

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██████████ wrote  
at 10:14pm on April 6th, 2008

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When I think of Palestinian youth, I generally think of very young children, under age 10. I imagine after that children would be hard-pressed to remain children. Those kids I do think of, I associate with sorrow and a lost sense. In this I don't mean they can have no joy--I think kids can't help having some innate innocent happiness--but I mean that it isn't likely they will be able to continue that contentness through adulthood.

When I think of American youth, I think of childhood extending through at least high school; I can still see a childish quality in my grandpa's eyes, though, so who knows? I get the impression Palestinians are being forcefully bereft of this.

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██████████ (Jefferson City / Columbia, MO) wrote  
at 6:29pm on April 6th, 2008

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Hello to all of our friends in Palestine. I won't pretend to know alot about Palestine. Honestly, I receive most of my information about Palestine from cable TV news or the nightly news. The issues seem extremely complex, so I rarely read news stories about the topic. When I hear the word "Palestine," I don't necessarily think of violence, but I do think of unrest. It seems as though there is general turmoil surrounding your country. By no means am I saying that my perception is accurate. It's certainly influenced by the media. What does TV news look like in Palestine? What images of America do you receive?

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## Palestinian–American Youth 2 Youth Interaction's Wall



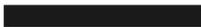
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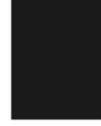
Write something...

Post

  (American University of Sharjah) wrote  
at 4:50pm on April 6th, 2008

hi everyone, I totally agree with  that getting to fully understand and interpret all historical events is a complicated yet a critical thing to do. However, lets all keep in mind that history was always written by the stronger nation or people so its better not to go back to 100s or 1000s years. Moving on, it's obvious that the American media is always bias to Israel but lets ask ourselves why. Is it the American media fault or maybe Arab Nations aren't spending enough to help improve their image in the west. Answering Liz question about the new generation tolerance, I don't believe that the new Palestinian generation would have more tolerance than the old one. The great injustice the Palestinians are still facing is creating more hate not only to Israel but to the International comity as well. Finally, I'd like to hear more from the American participants about the image they have about Palestinian youth and what comes to their minds when they hear the word "Palestine".

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  (Jordan) wrote  
at 1:57pm on April 6th, 2008

Now if the American media is biased, and the American educational system (surly the European system too) have failed to introduce probably what I call sometimes "Downtown conflict" to their younger generations then how are the American people –who have the "right to know"– going to know what is the real deal? I'll leave you guys with this to think of. Finally I would really love to thank you all for participating in this group, Saleem is my mentor, friend and brother, and I strongly believe that what we are doing in this group is a partial answer to my previous question.

  
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 [Ahmed Hasna](#) (Jordan) wrote  
at 1:57pm on April 6th, 2008

Hello everyone, honestly I could not agree more with what each and every one of you have said. Basically, pretty much all of us agree that the American media is obviously biased, taking sides with Israel through thick and thin, through good and bad, in sickness and in health. Historically, it is quite hard for those who are not from this region (the middle east) to fully understand what has been going on for the past 5000 or so years, I myself did some research about historical Palestine/Israel region and discovered that I still have loads of reading to do so I can at least form a clearer picture of the situation. So far the historical debate that Israel is putting up is being lost in terms of research and excavations, a lot of bright and well-known Israeli archeologists, anthropologists, and historians failed to prove that the land of Israel existed before in the same format that is being promoted to the world through the media or otherwise. (next post)

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██████████ wrote  
at 1:41pm on April 6th, 2008

██████████ hi. I would, more or less agree with you, although I think that "Supermen" is being a little harsh. Americans and Western Europeans are certainly arrogant though. And if that's what you meant, then I agree. And that attitude has been a gross part of "Western" thought for a long long time, going back to the colonial days of England and their "missionary" work in Africa and other places. Their extended helping hand was really a hand extended down to try and make these "other savage" people more like us. And, I don't mean to defend it. Other than infrastructure things, like clean water, power, etc., the "American" lifestyle isn't really that great, certainly not good enough that I or any other American could judge that everyone should live like this, like us.

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██████████ wrote  
at 12:09pm on April 6th, 2008

I'd like to take us back to what ██████████ had to say here about the American education system. Now, I can't think of one time Palestine was ever mentioned in one of my high school (or college) classes in a historical context; if anything, Palestine would have come inadvertently as a current events topic. Why aren't our school systems formally teaching us about this issue?

Failure in the school system lends itself to a lot of misinformation. This is why Bush can get away with so much of what he's been doing in the Middle East; most Americans, myself included, just haven't been familiarized with that region, and I at least haven't taken huge steps to fix that.

The second piece of misinformation this aids is a Middle Eastern stereotype. Based on what other people have been saying, I see most of us can agree that American media is biased. This being our major source of information, we are engrained with set images of Palestine; like a fantasy novel someone controls what we see.

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██████████ wrote  
at 9:52am on April 6th, 2008

██████████ I think what you are saying has a lot of validity. The struggle of the Palestinian people has been turned into the endless "Palestinian-Israeli Conflict" by the American media and the public mindset, where the people involved (Palestinians and Israelis) are stripped of their humanity and simply turned into characters and angry faces in a story that repeats itself over and over again. It is seen as a conflict that is "over there," across an ocean, that we don't really need to be concerned about. This is very evident in the way it seemed President Bush handled peace negotiations between Abbas and Olmert. It seemed that he saw these peace negotiations as just another "good deed" to add to his resume, to make his presidency end in a success. He would be the "savior" of the Palestinians and Israelis—but with this mindset, I don't think any real solutions could come about. But I try to see Palestinians for the real people that they are, which is the purpose of this group.

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██████████ (Palestine) wrote  
at 6:01am on April 6th, 2008

I don't intend to be offensive in any sense, but my conception of the Americans in particular and Europeans as well, is that they have this feeling of the superior race. Superman who saves the world or that you have to protect your lifestyle from the primitive human beings on the other side of the world. It's a stereotypical image but I can't help but get that conception of the Americans, even though I don't claim that this applies to every American.

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██████████ wrote  
at 7:57pm on April 5th, 2008

I'm with Lauren on this one. Historically, I have a vague vague vague understanding of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict but admittedly do not know much about it in the present. I also feel that the news coverage is far too frequent for the poor content and lack of depth. I feel like that it is ambiguously general sometimes. And I guess that for being uninformed, I have a question to ask. In the US I think that younger generations are far more tolerant of other

cultures and that as our more tolerant population ages this could help resolve a lot of the differences among us. Do you think that this holds true for Palestinians? Are the youth more tolerant than the older generations generally? I sometimes think that we just have to wait for a more connected group of people (us or at least younger) to be in power for peace to come about in the world. Albeit, we will always have diplomats wanting to rule for selfish reasons. Let me know what you think.

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██████████ wrote  
at 7:23pm on April 5th, 2008

I have no doubt that American media is biased against Palestinians. I grew up in a very small, very Southern Baptist town here in Missouri. All I know about Palenstine (which, admittedly, is very little - one reason I'm in this group), I had to find out on my own. We never really learned about it in school. I'm sure I have all kinds of misinformation about the Israeli/Palenstinian conflict due to the poor (and in my case, nearly non-existent local) media coverage.

I should probably read that book, too...

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██████████ wrote  
at 4:09pm on April 5th, 2008

Hello Palestine! What's up? I would have to agree with ██████████ that the American media is biased against Palestine. I can't even imagine how or in what way anyone would argue to the contrary... i.e. the American media is not biased against Palestine or the American media is not pro-Israel. I haven't read the Friedman book, maybe I should. He seems like he might give it a level headed treatment. If even just your typical New York Times slant, which is pretty pro-Israel.

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██████████ (Utrecht) wrote  
at 4:36am on April 5th, 2008

On the last issues, i think none of us could deny the existence of israel, it is simply as denying the existence of the US or any other country, however, the historical injustice that the world still does not acknowledge need to be undone to the palestinains. Meaning that our rights as people must be given to us or us taken them through whatever we have. The point is that a Palestine should be there next to israel.

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██████████ (Utrecht) wrote  
at 4:33am on April 5th, 2008

As for american media, i would refer you to:

Peace, propoganada and the promised land

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4531457358374474428&q=peace+war+and+t+he+promised+land&total=102&start=0&num=10&so=0&type=search&plindex=0>

A good movie about american media in particular...

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██████████ (Utrecht) wrote  
at 4:27am on April 5th, 2008

Beriet to jerusalem is amazing journalistic book of friedmans interactions when he reported in both cities, i like Hama Rules chapter it gives a good insight on arabic political structure, but in any case something to keep in mind is that everything within the palestinian israeli conflict is debated, numbers, facts, events etc... so never take anything for granted...

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██████████ (Palestine) wrote



at 1:32am on April 5th, 2008

how do i feel about how the American media covering the palestinian/israeli conflict, i think it is extremely biased, and very selective, portraying the Palestinians either as Islamic fanatics who want to kill the "jews "everywhere or a bunch of ignorant peasants.

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 wrote  
at 10:48pm on April 4th, 2008

I have a few questions:

How do Palestinians feel about the way American media reports on Palestine and Israel?

I just got the book From Beirut to Jerusalem by Thomas Friedman, I heard from someone who had read it before that it sides a little bit with Israel but that it overall gives a thorough background of the history of the conflict in the holy land. Have any of you read this book?

In terms of being politically correct, I'm never sure what I should call the Holy Land. In America, we call that region Israel, but I know that a lot of people don't even acknowledge Israel as a sovereign state. I know its a touchy issue and I'd like to get others' opinions.

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**Saleem ALHABASH** wrote  
at 8:24pm on April 4th, 2008

Hello Everyone,

Let me start by thanking you all for taking time and effort to do this! Your participation is of great value to me and my research. So, Just to start off, I wanted to let everyone know that you can ask any type of question here to people from Palestine/USA. Do not feel shy! This is the place to ask!

To start up the discussion, it would interesting to know what you guys think about your counterparts (Palestinians/Americans)? What is the image that you have about them? And how did you develop this image?

Do not limit yourselves to these questions, they are just guiding questions for the discussion :)

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## Discussion Topic "Common Interests..."

### Common interests...



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 [\[REDACTED\]](#) wrote  
on Apr 6, 2008 at 7:19 AM

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Hello everyone, I believe that we "youth" as much we are different, I still believe that we can have some points we share in life. For example, ambitions, dreams and even music...etc  
I'll mention some of my interests...and I hope you guys tell me some of yours too. Well I'm 19 I love fine music, writing poems in English and graphic design.  
and btw I'm a Lost big fan, I guess it's the best American export to the world :D  
I wonder if you guys would be interested in listening to Palestinian Folklore music?  
anyways, looking forward for you replies ;)

 [\[REDACTED\]](#) replied to [\[REDACTED\]](#)  
on Apr 6, 2008 at 11:57 AM

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[\[REDACTED\]](#) hi. I too am a big, big, Lost fan. And, I agree it might be the best American export yet. Coca-Cola is pretty darn good, though. I say, upload a video/audio of Palestinian folklore music.

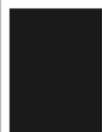
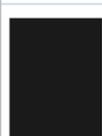
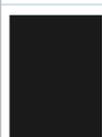
How do you watch Lost? That is to ask, do you watch it weekly as they come out, online from the ABC Web site or some other Web outlet or on DVDs as they come out? I'm a fan of waiting for a whole season to finish then watching them on DVD all at once. So, right now, I'm a season behind. I haven't watched any of season four, I'll just watch them when they're released on Netflix.

 [\[REDACTED\]](#) replied to [\[REDACTED\]](#)  
on Apr 6, 2008 at 12:47 PM

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well i watch it weekly episode by episode, I'm keeping up with the US. I get it weekly, actually my internet connection can't download 350 MB in a day, so I buy from a store that downloads it and translates and burns it to a cd...it's aired on thurs in the US, I watch it on Sats. Every Sat I leave the university really happy and excited because i'll step by the store and buy my new episode...u can't imagine how this cd makes me happy! ( I know I'm lil bit obsessed). I got to tell u season 4 is really good, beyond expectations!!!  
But sadly it's only 13 episodes and now it's a break!  
this is a video where pics and a folklore song are featured:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec8wPaMAMPE>  
(i've made it) :D I live in Gaza!  
Have fun!

	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> wrote  on Apr 6, 2008 at 4:52 PM </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> Hi, I'm Lindsay and I'm 22 years old. I'm a photojournalism student and I hope to work at a newspaper when I graduate. I love to read, hike and go out with my friends. I just started watching Lost this season...and so far i'm really confused but I still like it. I think i'm going to go back and start with the first season so I know what's going on. My favorite music is country, but I'm excited to listen to some of your music. </p>	
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 7, 2008 at 12:08 AM </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> You know I like country music too, there's an american muslim singer called Kareem Salama. He's a country singer from Oklahoma....  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUUsUzYEMKk">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUUsUzYEMKk</a>  have fun watching Lost, season 1 is the best :) </p>	
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 7, 2008 at 4:05 PM </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> Ooh, <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> you really need to start at the beginning. If I were you, I would stop right now, immediately, and start with the first season. Otherwise...well, it's just not the same. One of the best parts about Lost is the ridiculous suspense factor, when you leap off the couch in surprise. I'm sure Lina would agree? Country, huh? Although I spent a large portion of my youth in Nebraska, I never really got into country. I tried though. But, now there's "pop" country and country country. Like Faith Hill versus Hank Williams Jr. </p>	
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 7, 2008 at 4:08 PM </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> I dig it. The music is much better than country if you ask me. All the beaches and sunshine and sand made me homesick for Los Angeles. Missouri does not look like Palestine. That's too bad if you ask me. Everyone needs the ocean in their lives. </p>	
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 8, 2008 at 2:05 AM </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> Well I listen to all kind of music, hip hop, pop, R&amp;B and classiccs :D so I have not problems :D and about Lost, MAN!!! it keeps u on the edge of ur seat! </p>	
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> wrote  on Apr 8, 2008 at 5:28 PM </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> Hey guys,  I'm 20 and a magazine journalism major. I don't know if I want to do journalism after college though. It looks like everyone likes Lost--I got into it last year with my boyfriend so we watched the first 3 episodes over the period of a month or two on the computer whenever we were together for a weekend. It kinda sucked my life away. I never have time to watch it on tv, so I will probably also watch all of season 4 after it comes out on dvd. Other than that, I don't watch much tv. I'd rather read a book or go out hiking. I like all kinds of music too- alternative, country, Celtic, every now and then rap/hip-hop but I prefer non-offensive lyrics. </p>	

	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 8, 2008 at 5:30 PM </p> <p> [Redacted] I used to write poetry too, but I don't very much anymore. What type of poetry do you write? Would you feel comfortable showing us any of it? I was always too shy to let people read mine, because I never felt like it was very good. That's probably why I don't do it as much anymore. </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 8, 2008 at 11:37 PM </p> <p> Hey [Redacted], seriously I'm not sure of what I write whether it's poetry or lyrics. Well I'm cool with showing it to you but the thing is just like you said, you feel it's really lame and not good AT ALL even your friends tell you it's good and so on.  I like to write to whatever comes to my mind; I've many inspirations around me, especially those who sing about life. Like you said, me too I don't like offensive lyrics, I love music with a deep message.  If you want I can send you on facebook something of what I wrote </p> <p>take care,</p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 9, 2008 at 4:23 PM </p> <p>Sure, I'd love to read it!</p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> (Tulsa) wrote  on Apr 11, 2008 at 8:13 AM </p> <p> Hmm I am older than many of you at age 30. I am a part time grad student in Communications at Oklahoma State Unviersity and a full-time PR coordinator for another local college. I also teach journalism to college student as an adjunct instructor. I am interested in new technology (especially social networking) feminism, travel and I love to read good books when I can. </p> <p>Also I have many episodes of Lost on my Tivo to catch up on....</p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to Nicole</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
 <p>Post #14</p>	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> (Palestine) wrote  on Apr 12, 2008 at 4:13 AM </p> <p> hello everybody i am [Redacted] from Palestine .. i am still 18 years old and this is my first year in university . lam studying Business but am so interested in media &gt;&gt; my biggest wish is to travel , a like to meet new people and i hope i could discuss the truth about my country .. for that i have learned one of our Follklor matters which is "DABKA" may be it looks some thing strange but i will explain : it is some steps like dancing but almost we use legs and foots to do the dabka and it is according to the faloklor music ... in dabka's shows we have " girls and guys" to wear our tadtional clothes ... i hope you can see it it is amazing and it is enough to say it is Palestinian ..  i am so ambitious girl and for that my degrees are the highest any way i sometimes find myself interested in Politics especially US bcz i found it so complicated and in the same time so influenial  i like reading but later i haven't read , swimming , fashion ,painting and i am so interested in music especially the old </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>

	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 12, 2008 at 4:13 PM </p> <p> Thanks for posting that Kareem Salama video, Lina! I don't have any close Muslim friends (haven't avoided them, nor specifically sought them out)... and so it's always good to be reminded of how similar people from different cultures are. I don't even like country music, and I liked that video. =) </p> <p> On another note, I feel like I'm the only person who hasn't watched Lost. In fact, I don't even own a TV, even though I was raised in a home with five TVs! </p> <p> I have a couple questions... do a lot of Palestinian youth listen to Palestinian folk music? (And Americans, what do you think is our closest cultural equivalent to Palestinian folk music? And how many of us listen to it?) </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 12, 2008 at 7:28 PM </p> <p> You are welcome Michael, Kareem Salama ROCKS!  Well lool I can't imagine what life would look like without TV, but I live in Gaza so no tv no fun!  I listen to Palestinian folk music sometimes, or when they are played in weddings. </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 19, 2008 at 7:45 PM </p> <p> I've noticed in general that, at least from the Americans I know who are participating in this, that the Americans who are participating in this group are generally much older than the palestinians. maybe not though. we could use some descriptive statistics on that. not that it matters. i'm just sayin. observin'. you know. maybe we'll find out when the study is released. </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> (Jefferson City / Columbia, MO) replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 20, 2008 at 7:48 PM </p> <p> what people in american popular culture have our friends in palestine heard of? i imagine that michael jordan and michael jackson are fairly standard, but who else is there? i'd be interested to see what entertainers or sports figures from America travel across the ocean in terms of popularity. </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 20, 2008 at 11:17 PM </p> <p> Personally too many!!!  I've lived in Bolivia before Gaza, though I was young but I remember a lot of shows, singers they were shown there. Maybe in Gaza people more like Arab entertainers and European sport figures. I personally like American shows and movies more than Arabic one, even in music. Like I said earlier I'm Losts biggest fan in Gaza!! Now in Palestine and in the middle east in general we have access to the American culture more than u can imagine!! </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 21, 2008 at 2:47 PM </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a> </p>

	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 12, 2008 at 4:13 PM </p> <p> Thanks for posting that Kareem Salama video, Lina! I don't have any close Muslim friends (haven't avoided them, nor specifically sought them out)... and so it's always good to be reminded of how similar people from different cultures are. I don't even like country music, and I liked that video. =) </p> <p> On another note, I feel like I'm the only person who hasn't watched Lost. In fact, I don't even own a TV, even though I was raised in a home with five TVs! </p> <p> I have a couple questions... do a lot of Palestinian youth listen to Palestinian folk music? (And Americans, what do you think is our closest cultural equivalent to Palestinian folk music? And how many of us listen to it?) </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 12, 2008 at 7:28 PM </p> <p> You are welcome Michael, Kareem Salama ROCKS!  Well lool I can't imagine what life would look like without TV, but I live in Gaza so no tv no fun!  I listen to Palestinian folk music sometimes, or when they are played in weddings. </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 19, 2008 at 7:45 PM </p> <p> I've noticed in general that, at least from the Americans I know who are participating in this, that the Americans who are participating in this group are generally much older than the palestinians. maybe not though. we could use some descriptive statistics on that. not that it matters. i'm just sayin. observin'. you know. maybe we'll find out when the study is released. </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> (Jefferson City / Columbia, MO) replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 20, 2008 at 7:48 PM </p> <p> what people in american popular culture have our friends in palestine heard of? i imagine that michael jordan and michael jackson are fairly standard, but who else is there? i'd be interested to see what entertainers or sports figures from America travel across the ocean in terms of popularity. </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 20, 2008 at 11:17 PM </p> <p> Personally too many!!!  I've lived in Bolivia before Gaza, though I was young but I remember a lot of shows, singers they were shown there. Maybe in Gaza people more like Arab entertainers and European sport figures. I personally like American shows and movies more than Arabic one, even in music. Like I said earlier I'm Losts biggest fan in Gaza!! Now in Palestine and in the middle east in general we have access to the American culture more than u can imagine!! </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a>  <a href="#">Report</a>  <a href="#">Delete Post</a> </p>
	<p> <a href="#">[Redacted]</a> replied to <a href="#">[Redacted]</a>  on Apr 21, 2008 at 2:47 PM </p>	<p> <a href="#">Reply to [Redacted]</a>  <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a> </p>

Post #20

I think its awesome that you don't own a TV! I do have one in my room right now, but it is a terrible waste because I never watch it. Every once in a while I watch the one in the living room, but not very often. I lived for a year without TV and didn't miss it at all.

My boyfriend and I have decided that when we are married and have kids we will probably not have a TV. We both think it seems to do more harm than good, and there are much better ways to entertain yourself. I value creativity and imagination more than fancy things.

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██████████ wrote

on Apr 21, 2008 at 7:54 PM

This might be typically American, but I really love rock--classic rock and modern alternative, indie, folk. I'd definitely be interested in Palestinian folk.

I'm also a 19 year old journalism student, but mostly I associate with my double major, peace studies. I like literature, music, anything creative. How does this hold up to my Palestinian counterpart?

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██████████ replied to ██████████

on Apr 22, 2008 at 9:42 AM

I'm a big fan of rock as well, but Palestinians:

What are the main instruments used in your favorite music and what are some of the lesser-known instruments?

(example: Main instruments: 6-string guitar, bass guitar; Lesser-known: Mandolin, Lap Steel, Upright Bass)

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██████████ replied to ██████████

on Apr 22, 2008 at 4:31 PM

Is everyone in this group in college (I don't remember whether that was in the guidelines. . .)? What's everyone studying?

Like a lot of people in this group from Missouri, I'm studying journalism.

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██████████ replied to ██████████

on Apr 23, 2008 at 8:16 PM

I've always been interested in languages, since here in Gaza it's not available; I had no choice but to join the English literature department in Islamic University in Gaza. And I'm not very happy with it. The cool thing is that I spend a lot of time at home, and I learnt English almost by myself, so I believe I can learn Spanish, for example, by myself too.

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██████████ replied to ██████████

on Apr 26, 2008 at 6:54 PM

Well, ██████████ your English seems to be pretty good so Congrats! It helps to watch T.V. in foreign languages that you are studing. That's a great way to learn another language.

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██████████ replied to ██████████

on Apr 26, 2008 at 7:29 PM

[Reply to ██████████](#)

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Post #26  
1 reply

yea I still believe that 4 episodes of Lost can do the job of 4 years of university :D !

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replied to  
on Apr 28, 2008 at 3:58 PM

Yeah, I think TV can really help you learn a language and especially the humor of another country. I think humor is one of the hardest things to learn in a language but watching TV is a great way to learn it. English also has so many phrases that literally make no sense for example "It's raining cats and dogs" means it's raining really hard outside, not that cats and dogs are falling from the sky.

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replied to  
on Apr 29, 2008 at 12:16 AM

yeaaaa idioms!!

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replied to  
on May 1, 2008 at 8:06 PM

Hey I love graphic design. In fact, that's basically what I'm studying here. As far as music preferences go, I kinda got stuck in the 1970s and my brain won't accept anything beyond that as music (unless it is Michael Jackson. I loooove Michael Jackson.) Is that weird? I've never seen an episode of Lost in my life! I would like to hear Palestinian Folklore music. Where could I find some to listen to? Meanwhile, may I recommend some ABBA, John Denver and Helen Reddy. I like music that sounds like liquid sugar, I suppose. :) What kind of music is popular in Palestine?

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replied to  
on May 4, 2008 at 1:16 PM

Hey  
Sorry for the late reply. I use photoshop and brushes for most designs. And about the 1970s music, I love a song called "Shambala" by 3 dog night, it cheers me up! And Micheal Jackson, in some point all people love song or two by him, I love "beat it". And about Palestinian folklore song, i'll look for one and send it to you!! Young people here in Gaza, where I live, love modern arabic music more than western once. I listen to selected western songs not all of it, I love music with inspiring lyrics.

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replied to  
on May 4, 2008 at 2:00 PM

[http://www.4shared.com/file/46420024/626a0e58/Nogomi.com\\_Rim\\_Banna-The\\_Moon\\_Glowed.html](http://www.4shared.com/file/46420024/626a0e58/Nogomi.com_Rim_Banna-The_Moon_Glowed.html)  
here's a song that I like :)

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## Discussion topic "What do Americans think about Gaza Strip?"

### What do Americans know about Gaza strip?



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#### Topic: What do Americans know about Gaza strip?

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Displaying all 7 posts by 6 people.

 [\[Redacted\]](#) wrote  
on Apr 12, 2008 at 7:51 PM

Hey, I really want to know, what Americans know about Gaza?  
Do you guys know that Gazans suffer severely? How much there's  
media coverage in your country about exactly Gaza strip?

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 [\[Redacted\]](#) (Jefferson City / Columbia, MO) replied to [\[Redacted\]](#)  
on Apr 14, 2008 at 8:54 AM

Hi [\[Redacted\]](#)

As far as the media's coverage of the Gaza strip here in America,  
we tend to hear about it only in relation to violence. I am by no  
means an expert on the subject, but the strip appears to be a  
highly contested piece of land. The point here is that whenever we  
hear about it, the word "violence" is always attached to it.  
What exactly is going on in Gaza?

1 reply

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 [\[Redacted\]](#) replied to [\[Redacted\]](#)  
on Apr 14, 2008 at 10:40 AM

\*Sigh\* where to start talking about Gaza?  
If you watch Lost, you'll find resemblance between both Gaza and  
The Island. Well Gaza has been under very strict siege for like 9  
months, due to Hamas taking over the Strip in last June. Many  
many things we forgot it, we almost don't even think about it. For  
example, traveling, the crossing between Gaza and Egypt is totally  
closed; so many sick people can't go out the strip to other  
neighboring countries to get treated so they die slowly. About 150  
people are now dead as a result of having no treatment. Other  
thing, these days they're cutting off providing us with fuel all  
kinds, so we are having no schools and universities many students  
come from South and North Gaza, now they have no means of  
transportations.

I'd 2 exams this week they were all postponed, and till next  
Saturday we're having days off. Last January they cut off the fuel  
of electricity so we stayed about like 2 weeks with about 6 hours  
of power a day, and there're rumors that the electricity will be cut  
again and I can tell you brotha, it ain't no cool staying in the dark.  
You know the situation in Gaza is inhumane on every level. You  
don't get that image in the media, I hope I could demonstrate  
you some aspects of the suffering we're living here in Gaza.

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 [\[Redacted\]](#) (Palestine) wrote  
on Apr 14, 2008 at 12:26 PM

If you want to know what is happening in Gaza, saw the videos  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0aEo59c7zU&feature=related>

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5CwXmenujc&feature=related>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQEZ2ad8z20&feature=related>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4hyDvCuHHE>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfvHWR12pQg&feature=related>  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujgDxr8r\\_mY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujgDxr8r_mY)

██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 15, 2008 at 7:48 AM

Hi, Lina. I'll second what Thomas said. There seems to be very little coverage about Gaza unless something violent happens, and then the news is about what happened with little context for why it happened. I consider myself to be more curious about the area than most Americans, and still I know little about the region.

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██████████ wrote  
on Apr 16, 2008 at 6:47 PM

I agree that reports about Gaza are always preceded by violence. I wish the media would give more context so that Americans would know more about what is going on, instead of trying to explain a something in a 30-second clip. The issue is much more important than a 30-second clip can explain.

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██████████ (Palestine) wrote  
on May 4, 2008 at 12:17 AM

Hi... I am a Palestinian who has been living in the USA for a year now. From what i feel, those American who tend to hear about Palestine these days, hear about it in a context that relates to Gaza. Having said that, they do not hear about it from the regular news... The media does not do justice here. But when news does enter from the little cracks here are there, it can very much be Gaza related, especially because of the boycott, the cut of electricity and the lack of fuel. I work in the NGO world... so that is how the news comes in.

Gaza is also famous for the Kasam rockets.

Those who i know who actively try to find out about news on Palestine are interested to know about Gaza because of the increasing poverty rate and inhuman treatment by Israel. But again, these people are very very few... and they know something because they work in an international organisation. The average American does not know.

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## Discussion topic: "Palestinian opinion of Americans"

### Palestinian opinion of Americans



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Topic: **Palestinian opinion of Americans**

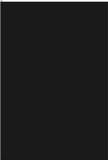
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- 
-  [\[Redacted\]](#) wrote  
on Apr 4, 2008 at 6:55 PM
- I've always wondered what most Palestinians thought of Americans. I lived in Egypt for 6 years so I understand the Egyptian perspective on everything and became friends with a Lebanese girl while over there. Upon us all moving back to our home countries, I learned quickly that my Lebanese friend hated the US (although she later came to college in the US) because the US backed Israel, who was bombing Lebanon at the time. I figured since she despised the US and Americans as a collective whole that Palestians' opinions would be even stronger against the US. What is the Palestinian perception of the US and of Americans?
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-  [\[Redacted\]](#) replied to [\[Redacted\]](#)  
on Apr 4, 2008 at 11:08 PM
- Hey [\[Redacted\]](#), I personally don't hate Americans, because I think they are like any people in the world want to live normal lives. However, I deeply hate the American government, I really do and I do blame it for all the misery the world lives. Not just because of backing Israel but also, because of war on Iraq and many many things in the world...I think most of people make distinction between the ordinary people who has nothing to do with the American foreign affairs and between the gangs who rule the white house :)
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-  [\[Redacted\]](#) (Palestine) replied to [\[Redacted\]](#)  
on Apr 4, 2008 at 11:11 PM
- hello stephanie :) im gonna tell u how the palestinien feel towards America "US policy" that its not neutral in its openion or the way it deals with the palestinien and israel conflict , what america offers for israel from support and back up in lebanon nothing infront what it helped israel in the past ana what its helping now and will in the futur ,one of the funny nicknames that people in palestine say that israel like another state of america and like its spoiled child wahtever they do o say there is always an exuse for all their Actions .
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- 
-  [\[Redacted\]](#) (Utrecht) wrote  
on Apr 5, 2008 at 2:43 AM
- As a palestiniaian you need to understand that it is not about hate or love but its about our feeling of injustice that is still fundamental in palestinian society. The US was not that invlove in the early history of the conflict so blaming the US would be stupid
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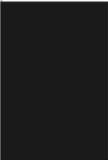
in terms of that. But American policy towards Israel with more than 2 billion dollar a year as military support that is eventually used against us, make us see israel and the US as the same. When an F-16 jet that is american made bombs my city then i feel that the US is also up ther bombing me.

We do not hate you as americans, i have many american friends and admire a lot about the culture as i dislike a lot about the american culture. However, that goes for all nations around the world. We dislike your policy towards Israel that occupies us, we dislike the way you entered Iraq and the way you supported the ivasion of lebanon. Thats what we dislike. I do not blame the people of the US but i think it is time for them to rise up and say something about it

 wrote  
on Apr 5, 2008 at 10:39 AM

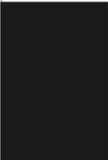
I'm glad that yall distinguish between US government and the US people. There are those in the world who aren't able to do so... I am always sad with the American media not covering objectively to let the Americans really know what's going on in the world... In Egypt we'd read the papers and would actually learn what was going on. I understand how others could so easily dislike the US government. I for one think years ago the US should have backed off on their support of Israel, among other things. I think the US has helped increase problems, if not through their actions directly in the region then at least through who they support.

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 (Palestine) wrote  
on Apr 6, 2008 at 3:48 AM

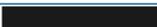
I think that citizens of one of the most influential country on earth (the United States) have a responsibility to be more educated about what's happening in the other side of the world, and I don't mean just Palestine. But I don't think the problem is just about being pro-palestinian, or knowing more about the Palestinian cause, in my opinion , it's the "Orientalist" approach.

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 (Palestine) wrote  
on Apr 6, 2008 at 4:01 AM

for me i hate americans but i used to study there , they was so rude with me ,, specially when they know am palestinian and there gov made them the killeing People , but they are humen's and one of the Biggest Country around the World , looking for them as they control our lives and our gov's

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 replied to   
on Apr 6, 2008 at 12:14 PM

What I think is important to realize about the U.S. government is that, while all Americans who are 18 or older can vote and nominally that makes a democracy, the U.S. government really is more of a plutocracy. There are almost unimaginable amounts of money that sit at the top, reside with, the policy makers and others influential to U.S. foreign policy. And, I would argue that the U.S. position on Palestine and Israel reflects not what are the feelings of 99% percent Americans, but, instead, its foreign policy reflects the special interests of a few very rich people. It's sad and gross, but true. And, it's frustrating to know that a majority of the country might feel one way, but one or two rich people can influence the foreign policy in the opposite direction simply because of how much money they have. It amounts to organized,

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sanctioned, legal corruption.



Post #9  
2 replies

██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 6, 2008 at 12:41 PM

i'd have to agree that our country gets a little too involved with the affairs of other nations. instead of playing world policeman, i wish we'd adopt a more isolationist policy. however, i have to look back at the success america had in WWI... had america not come to the aid of the allies, we may all be living in a much different world. it's hard for me to agree that US involvement in foreign affairs is all bad. what is the Palestinian perspective on US involvement in international affairs?

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██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 6, 2008 at 1:03 PM

Well personally, I think if American gov steps back and take care of it's own biz things in the world will be better....  
Because when the US prys in other countries biz, it's good for no one but the US.  
Not about keeping the world safe of wars :/

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██████████ wrote  
on Apr 6, 2008 at 4:47 PM

It's hard for me to decide how I feel about the US intervening in other countries' business. On the one hand, I do not agree with the Iraq war and I think the US should not have gotten involved. However on the other hand it is hard to sit back and watch when there are genocides going on in places like Darfur and famines in other countries. Should the US, which has the money to provide support and food, just look the other way? It seems like we get blamed for not helping when we don't and we get blamed for helping when we do.

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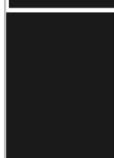
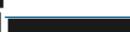
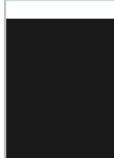
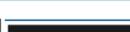
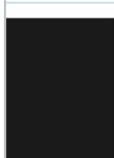
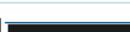
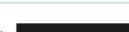
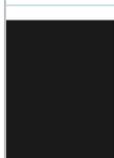
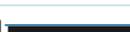


██████████ wrote  
on Apr 6, 2008 at 10:48 PM

Like many others who have posted, I agree that unfair media portrayals and the lack of discussion about international politics in school contribute to misrepresentations/misunderstandings about Palestinians. I think another huge contributing factor is that for Americans, it can be easy to ignore what's going on in the rest of the world. On an individual level, US foreign policy doesn't always immediately affect our day-to-day lives (obviously, this is a simplification, but what I'm getting at is that it's easy to go about your daily life without being forced to think how US foreign policy affects the world.) I agree with Joseph's comment about the disconnect between the policy makers and the voting public. To expand on his point, I would argue that a lot of people aren't informed enough to really take a position, so the policy makers' plan is largely accepted (or ignored). And I agree with Majd's comment that US citizens have a responsibility to educate themselves about what's happening in the rest of the world. If US citizens were more informed and took a more active role in directing our government's foreign policy, I'm sure things would be different.

I think a large part of the problem is that we aren't exposed to other people's perspectives enough; we aren't forced to look outside of our self-interest.

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	<p> replied to  <a href="#">on Apr 7, 2008 at 10:28 AM</a></p> <p>Where did you study in the US? I'm just curious because different regions people act very differently...</p>	<p><a href="#">Reply to </a></p> <p><a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a></p> <p><a href="#">Report</a></p> <p><a href="#">Delete Post</a></p>
 <p>2 replies</p>	<p> wrote <a href="#">on Apr 7, 2008 at 12:51 PM</a></p> <p>I know all of us can find some fault with the US government and foreign policy. But I'd like to get back to another part of the original question. What do Palestinians think of Americans? A few people have touched on this, but I'm interested in finding out some of the common perceptions of Americans and American culture among Palestinians. I know in the US, we are not exposed to much of the Palestinian culture unless we seek it out ourselves. I'll admit that I know very little about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and even the culture of Palestine in general. Is this different in Palestine? Are Americans and American culture more represented in the media there? And if so, how are we portrayed?</p>	<p><a href="#">Reply to </a></p> <p><a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a></p> <p><a href="#">Report</a></p> <p><a href="#">Delete Post</a></p>
	<p> replied to  <a href="#">on Apr 7, 2008 at 1:34 PM</a></p> <p>Well America is like strongest power in the world currently, so its culture is known around the world. In The Middle East we have wide access to the American culture, so I guess this is how we get to know the American culture. But in local media, Al Aqsa channel, for example, they more blame America for the siege and for every single problem happens to Palestinian. And seriously I agree with them, because if America stopped supporting Israel, we wouldn't be thinking how are we going to go to university tomorrow?! And that's the simplest example I can think of. But also again it's the American gov. not the American people...</p>	<p><a href="#">Reply to </a></p> <p><a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a></p> <p><a href="#">Report</a></p> <p><a href="#">Delete Post</a></p>
	<p> replied to  <a href="#">on Apr 7, 2008 at 4:14 PM</a></p> <p>I don't think that those living outside of the U.S. or at least those who have never spent a considerable amount of time here really realize that most or at least many, many Americans hate the U.S. government too. Maybe we don't hate the U.S. government with the same visceral sentiment as people who have been severely affected by its policies, but there is still a strong dislike. I feel frustrated by the huge gap that I feel separates the American people and it's government. We're all just like a bunch of ants scurrying around beneath Uncle Sam while he does whatever B.S. he sees fit to do.</p>	<p><a href="#">Reply to </a></p> <p><a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a></p> <p><a href="#">Report</a></p> <p><a href="#">Delete Post</a></p>
	<p> replied to  <a href="#">on Apr 7, 2008 at 9:12 PM</a></p> <p>In my opinion, the frustrating thing about the involvement of the U.S. government in foreign affairs is that it does not seem to be motivated by a genuine concern for those who are oppressed or for a true desire to spread democracy; the motivation of the U.S. to become involved in other countries seems to be solely to protect its own interests.</p>	<p><a href="#">Reply to </a></p> <p><a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a></p> <p><a href="#">Report</a></p> <p><a href="#">Delete Post</a></p>
	<p> replied to  <a href="#">on Apr 8, 2008 at 8:32 PM</a></p> <p>Of course we are going to protect our own interests. While it is</p>	<p><a href="#">Reply to </a></p> <p><a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a></p> <p><a href="#">Report</a></p>

Post #18  
1 reply

nice to be genuinely concerned for the well-being of other human beings, whatever country they may be from, running a country is much like running a business. Granted, we throw money at situations that don't warrant it while turning away from others that are more deserving. Those decisions are all about "compromises" and, more than anything, who owes someone a vote in Congress when the time comes. The bottom line for the American government is about keeping the power, privilege and money that it has at its disposal. We are going to support the countries that we believe are going to help us keep that power, privilege and money and thwart the efforts of countries who oppose us.

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[\[Redacted\]](#) k replied to [\[Redacted\]](#)  
on Apr 9, 2008 at 5:45 AM

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Hmm [\[Redacted\]](#), I think your post sums up everything that I despise about our nationalistic, selfish, arrogant government. Well articulated.

[\[Redacted\]](#) (Palestine) replied to [\[Redacted\]](#)  
on Apr 9, 2008 at 5:47 AM

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hey [\[Redacted\]](#), well, first of all, i would hav to disagree with the term american culture... its more international... if u mean culture as in tv shows, chain restaurants, in literature and in american local activites and in local news, people in the middle east are deffinitely exposed, and know much of "american culture"...

when it comes to what people think of americans, it would go back to an individual basis, each person with his own experience and from what he sees... and a person ends up comming up with a stereotype for those people (whether u like it or not, its sad but true..there is stereotype)..and it doesnt have to be a bad things.. so my personal stereo type of american character, is their arrogance, self-centered, undermining other people's thoughts and points of views, ignorance to all other aspects that do not concern them personally, selfishness... these r just in the sake of argument... im not trying to be harsh!:)

[\[Redacted\]](#) replied to [\[Redacted\]](#)  
on Apr 10, 2008 at 7:09 AM

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Hey Medhat,

That is a very interesting comment, in terms of the American character. I am a Latina, my mom is Venezuelan and my father is from Puerto Rico, my family currently lives in Puerto Rico, which is currently a "colony" of the United States, we are neither a state of the US or independent. Our economy is determined by the US, but we are second class citizens because we are not allowed to vote for the next President of the US. Although I was born in the United States, and would be considered American, because I have lived here a lot of my life, and I attend college here. However, I would agree that a lot of the typical american is arrogant, self-centered, and ignorant of others. I have created this opinion over the years, because I directly interact with americans, I am discriminated by them, treated differently, and I am always trying to explain things. I attend a university that is more than a little more than 87% white, in the middle of Missouri, so I encounter a lot of ignorance. I have some friends that are American that are more open to international politics, for example, but they deviate from the average American because they have studied abroad, they enjoy learning about different cultures, they major international studies, etc. I am not disagreeing with your

Post #21

statement, I guess I am expanding on it.

I was in Palestine last year (April/May 2007) with my good friend and my mother. My friend was born and raised in Palestine and his family moved to California when he was 15. My mother and I went through Israel and met him in Ramallah where we stayed with his grandparents. I have to say when I was in Palestine, I felt more comfortable being myself and speaking with individuals than I feel here in the United States. In terms of the Hispanic culture, I felt I could identify with the Arab culture in terms of enjoying to talk, being open, the hospitality, etc. I would say that sometimes I feel here in America like an outsider because sometimes white-americans can be "cold" you might see them and they don't say hi, for example. To go back to my experience, I also felt comfortable with Palestinians because I could sit down with anyone and discuss different current events, like Venezuela for example. When my mother would mention she was Venezuelan, many would say oo Chavez, and we could sit down and have an open discussion about Venezuela. When I would mention my father is Puerto Rican, most people would be genuinely interested in learning more. That is completely different from the people here in the United States that when I mention I am Latina, Americans ask me if I speak Mexican, which for me is completely inexcusable, especially when it comes from my professors, adults, and fellow colleagues.

I am a journalism student that is extremely interested in international news, and I think that is one way to "educate" Americans, I don't know if that is too ideal, but that is why I want to go into that industry.

██████████

██████████ (Palestine) wrote  
on Apr 12, 2008 at 3:48 AM

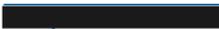
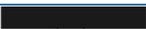
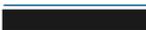
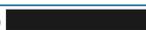
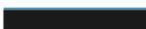
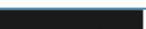
hey everyone, i am ██████████ from palestine... i think that US strongly supported Israel in everything .. till the picture of our case has reversed so that i think the US government is so far to be fair and of course that reflects all Americans although i am sure that there are some Americans against what israel is doing in Palestine >> but media focus on the others so here in Palestine we think that US is the main reason for our suffering , for the loss of our land , for the Israel occupation that is using international forbidden weapons >> and US do not say a word ??? US is the major country in the world and it is the super political and military power so it should think again about its uses actually , i think that if there are people who really believe our case they should change the policies of US in international area .... i guess US is democratic country so they can influence the government even that i started to doubt this idea later .. the seige here in gaza is a punishment for innocent people .... and this in the Christian religion is not acceptable  
i am not trying to consider feelings more because at the end we are living in a world which is ruled by POLICY where no place for feelings and you have to be 100% rational .But any way that is what is on land not on TV in Palestine and US is making for its own interest ??

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██████████ (Palestine) wrote  
on Apr 12, 2008 at 11:32 AM

Hello, I am ██████████ from Palestine, 19 years old studying at the University of Jerusalem – Abu Dis.  
Studying media and television second year, I joined this group because I need to convey the real picture of what is happening in Palestine ....

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	<p> replied to  on Apr 12, 2008 at 12:57 PM</p>	<p><a href="#">Reply to </a> <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a> <a href="#">Report</a> <a href="#">Delete Post</a></p>
<p>Post #24</p>	<p>i completely agree. although i regret to say that i am horribly ignorant of the situation between palestine and israel, had the US not taken a side, I feel that perhaps we would be in hot water about not helping one of the two out, what with all of the resources and manpower we have available. i also think that the action the US takes is done with the intent to help others and be a good global citizen. personally, i feel that if we have the ability and resources to help, we should do so in any way we can.</p>	
	<p> wrote on Apr 12, 2008 at 12:59 PM</p>	<p><a href="#">Reply to </a> <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a> <a href="#">Report</a> <a href="#">Delete Post</a></p>
<p>Post #25</p>	<p>also, i'd like to add that clearly Americans are divided on almost every issue we face as a country, and that the actions of our government almost never represent the views and opinions of the entire country.</p>	
	<p> replied to  on Apr 18, 2008 at 10:31 AM</p>	<p><a href="#">Reply to </a> <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a> <a href="#">Report</a> <a href="#">Delete Post</a></p>
<p>Post #26</p>	<p> you said in your post that Palestinian media lead viewers/readers to believe that "the US is the main reason for our (your) suffering." Are all of your news stories framed in this way? What kind of headlines do your major news outlets put out? Can you give me some examples? I'm very interested.</p>	
	<p> (Palestine) replied to  on Apr 19, 2008 at 3:39 AM</p>	<p><a href="#">Reply to </a> <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a> <a href="#">Report</a> <a href="#">Delete Post</a></p>
<p>Post #27</p>	<p>Well , . i did not mean the Palestinian media in particular by all the media because we here in Palestine try _as we can -to understand the different opinions about our case ... What i said is that the media do not focus on the Americans who SUPPORT our case and rights to live in our land so as a result and because we are not in US &gt;&gt;&gt;we our ideas become COMPLETELY influenced by the media &gt;&gt;&gt; and that what give us an idea that ALL Americans are responsible in our suffering I hope my idea become clear now another thing not all of our news stories framed like that even news JUST report what is actually going on and what is US response to the HOLOCAUST in gaza and to the PRISONERS in Israeli jails , settelments in the West Bank , and other unhuman activities against Palestinians and no positive attitude beside us is taken &gt;&gt;&gt; What do u think the overall thought about US??? and please do not tell me that we are TERRORISTS and deserve all this &gt;&gt;&gt; last thing i wanna say " media is so impersonal in its news but when what is going on internationally _i mean US_ is so clear i guess it SHOULD announce it "</p>	
	<p> replied to  on May 1, 2008 at 8:15 PM</p>	<p><a href="#">Reply to </a> <a href="#">Mark as Irrelevant</a> <a href="#">Report</a> <a href="#">Delete Post</a></p>
<p>Post #28</p>	<p>How much of the American support of Israel over Palestine do you think might be based on an innate sympathy for Jewish people among Americans? Historically, there have been very few people who have suffered as the Jews have, and I wonder if our perspectives as a nation are skewed and that we automatically</p>	

treat Jews as victims.

Also, how much do you think that the fact that Judaism is more closely related to Christianity than Islam has to do with America's support of Israel over Palestine? America is a free religious nation, but a majority is certainly Christian. Are we more likely to support a side whose religious foundations are more closely related to ours?

And let's say that both these things are true and that we are swayed by these things. Is that our fault? Would America appear just as cruel and unsympathetic if we were to support the Palestines?

I don't know, honestly. Just some thoughts. Let me know what you think! Thanks!

## Discussion topic posts “A Thought”

### A Thought

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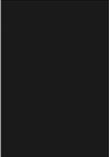


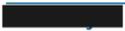
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 (Uni. Essex) wrote  
on Apr 28, 2008 at 6:42 AM

[Reply to !\[\]\(7dc4696240e3fa38d49df19b558e85da\_img.jpg\)](#)  
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Since I promised to contribute I will say this: Palestine and Palestinians should not be reduced to a media issue or a humanitarian affair. Palestine is first and foremost a global ethical issue; an issue that takes precedence over politics. I refuse to be made into a mere media item and my home into a newsroom.

Americans must understand this very critical point: Palestine is much larger than a local issue that the world's super power should take care of. Palestine is a lasting struggle against colonialism and the only responsibility that exists, whether for Palestinians or Americans, is to maintain it as such. The Americans' experience of Palestine and the Palestinian movement should not be located within the media and the false and empty knowledge it promotes, but rather it should be located within the local American struggles of everyday life. Let me give you an example: if you want to find Palestine in the U.S and connect to it, understand it, and take action in regards to it, then you can look towards the plight of the Native North Americans. Why do you need information about Palestinians in Ramallah when you don't even have information about the Natives in your home towns?

If the issue here is gaining knowledge to fight injustice then American people have it wrong, just like the Americans government. Instead of questioning “freedom” and “democracy” at home and seeking ways to pluralize cultural production, America goes to Iraq. The discussion of daily life issues does not form a kind of resistance, which is the only connection that should take place between Palestinians and Americans. There is no point of discussing my daily life through means such as facebook because the only result that may come out of that is the extraction of the “real” from my events and condemning them (my events) to mere images. Americans who are concerned with Palestine should first and foremost read Edward Said and Franz Fanon and adopt their writings as a lens through which they can perceive images and information from Palestine and thus find it at home, in the U.S, in the ghettos and reserves.

Last but not least: if you want to be “real” and if you want to take “action”, if you are really concerned about yourself and you mind in this world, if you care about humanity, then look at yourself and your environment before you seek narcissist refuge in someone else's struggle.

In response to some of the ideas, claims, or arguments that came about on the discussion board, whether Palestinian or American We are hostage to ourselves before we are hostage to any “group” or “policy”  
Radicalism should not be vilified but instead we should engage with it, question it, and see what good it may bring this

ideological world of today.

██████████ (Palestine) wrote  
on Apr 28, 2008 at 12:42 PM

Hi All,  
after weeks of being disconnected, i was trying to read some of what is writtin here, and it is really intersting to read how diffrences can be discussed.  
i agree with many points Saleh mentioned, but i really believe that learning more about our cause and reading books for Edward Saed can be good for us as palestininas more than any other nation.  
Americans and palestininas are not really recieveing and sending equal information about each other of course since we watch, and read alot about the American culture than they get to hear or see about us, by movies and tv shows that can only be discribed as unfaire and really biased when showing anything related to arabs and muslims and Palestinians, and i really can't hold not to name this show NCIS, that started to become one of my favourite shows but then suddenly they decided to make it more about political stands!  
but even though, and despite the fact that we are being exposed to all this amount to information about the american life, that is not enough to get it closer, in the contrary and because of all the negative messages and images we start to feel frustrated.  
on the other hand we are not being represented as Palestinians in America because we should work harder and because it's all about who have the money and the power to control the stage, and make others hear.  
Finally, why we should know about each other? i hope to hear the answer from any american around here? why do you want to know about people in Palestine?  
anyway, excuse my language and my ideas that may be repeated from other conversations, hope not ;)

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██████████ (Palestine) replied to ██████████  
on Apr 28, 2008 at 1:42 PM

HEY EVERY BODY  
well according to eman's final question I would like to answer her, yes as nations we have to know about the existance to each others as lonas we live in globlization era, we have to tbe aware specially that effects Ammerican as nation Palestinian will be the receptors for the consequences.  
but what really let me feel anxious, How come that many of American that I know Did not know about us as Palestinian while they have all the access to get the information easily.  
yes I agree that who got the money and the power will have the ability to be represented strongly. but we also can.  
all we need people to see the world through our eyes.

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██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 28, 2008 at 5:17 PM

I could not agree more that both Palestinians and Americans are not seeing accurate depictions of each other. Many talk about how certain groups (such as Palestinians) are misrepresented in many media, such as the news; however, very few discuss how other groups see Americans via movies, music, etc. I am not discrediting the fact that Americans need to learn more about Palestinians than that of which they see in the nightly news, I am just glad that you brought up the point of the dual poor

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representation.

Finally, to answer your question – I, as an American, am always interested in any culture that I have very little exposure to. As a journalism major, I find it very upsetting and disturbing how little I know about Palestinians other than that of which I learn about through the news. As I hear about the conflicts that some Palestinians are involved in, I have a desire to know more than the argument discussed at the surface. The news media continually covers the conflict in Iraq and every so often one will find a intriguing story about an Iraqi civilian and what the culture is like, with and without the conflict. However, no journalist has ever taken the time to really find out about the Palestinian culture and what being Palestinian is all about.

## Discussion topic posts “Diggin deeper into American activism...”

### Digging Deeper into American Activism in support of Palestine



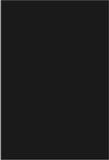
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**Topic: Digging Deeper into American Activism in support of Palestine** | [Delete Topic](#) | [Reply to Topic](#)

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 [\[Redacted\]](#) (Washington, DC) wrote  
on Apr 5, 2008 at 10:04 AM

I guess I may be coming to this group from a different avenue than some of the other Americans. So I think, for me, the easiest way to start this "conversation" or "question", would just be to say a little bit about me and where I'm coming from...

I identify as an anti-occupation Jewish-American. However, coming to this point has been a long journey, which I normally describe as a rollercoaster. I grew up in a typical Jewish-American family, attended Hebrew school, and learned about the importance of Israel for Jews all over the world. This background led me to visit Israel on a youth trip when I was 16. When I was there, I both fell in love with the country but also began to see a (very tiny) glimpse of the conflict occurring there. When I returned to the US I began to study more about Israel and the conflict. I majored in International Relations and even studied abroad at an Israeli University.

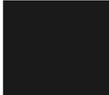
Not until I graduated college and returned to Jerusalem to live for a year did the word "occupation" ever enter my vocabulary. While in Jerusalem I began working with a coexistence organization (which I won't name here because I actually have a lot of problems with them). However, while working for them, my job was to interview Palestinian youth about their ideas on the conflict and really talk with them about what they would want to tell Israelis if they met. Hearing story after story about just how much the occupation has affected their lives also changed my life, my views, and my perception of what was REALLY occurring there. Since then, I have returned to the US and have been highly involved in activism towards ending the occupation, have returned for numerous visits and have become very critical of Israel, its existence as a Jewish state, and of the US' role in maintaining the occupation of Palestine. THUS, leads me to my question...

What role can/should Americans as activists play in supporting Palestinians?

I have heard differing opinions in this area from my friends who are Palestinian and would love to hear what you all have to say.

If others have questions for me, please feel free to ask!

---

 [\[Redacted\]](#) (Utrecht) replied to [\[Redacted\]](#)  
on Apr 5, 2008 at 10:31 AM

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Post #2  
1 reply

Dear [REDACTED]

First let me begin by thanking you for being open minded and for the courage you showed by doing such a thing. Its not only you, most and the biggest defenders of the palestinian cause in the U.S.A are jewish such as Naom Chomsky, Finkilstein and many many others including rabbis etc... This kind of movement within the jewish world is important to the palestinians in different aspects because if you disagree then it validates in any case our cause for freedom from occupation etc...I think it remains that most jewish americans are either not informed at all or are in any case the biggest supporters of Israel and Israeli actions.

The best way as students is doing what students did in divestment campains against Israel and its behaviour, these worked for Suth Africa and if it picks up momentum could at least send a message to the world. Other things might be on the longer-term which is lobbying campains and lobbying organization seeing what the Israel lobby does, it could also be done by the other side, at the end the U.S.A is a democracy with all its flaws. Iformation campains, alternative media such as democracy now etcc are all interrelated and the ultimate goal is that the U.S starts acting in a more objective and unbias way.

On an emotional level it helps to see that there are those who are able to support are cause, seeing such a thing as a palestinian youth not only gives me hope but motivates me to do more.

Thank you again,

Sincerely,  
A.

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[REDACTED] (Washington, DC) replied to [REDACTED]  
on Apr 8, 2008 at 8:46 AM

Thanks About, I agree with you completely and I think thats what a lot of people are focusing on here.

Im wondering, what do you think about American orgniazations doing work IN Palestine? My roommate is Palestinian and she actually has a lot of problems with outside orgniazations coming into Palestine and imposing their own ideas about what can be done. I tend to agree with her, because I believe that solutions need to come from within the society. However, on the other hand, Id love to go there and work for a while...Im just trying to figure out what would be the best way to do that and really support all of the amazing things that are happening already within the Palestinian society.

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[REDACTED] (Utrecht) replied to [REDACTED]  
on Apr 8, 2008 at 2:43 PM

Dear Emily,

There are several battles for palestinians to be involved in, some of these battles palestinians need help in, such as settlment building, checkpoint protests and protection of civilans that the international soldarity moment did a good job. No one can impose things on palestinians as we could see from the voting booth and the scandle in the vanity fair article in which the U.S was invloved along with israel and some palestinain officals in fighting Hamas. The idea that a soldarity or an international organization can impose is simply degrading and simply does not work in reality, take iraq as an exmapple and a lot of third world countries around the world in which regieme change never managed to happen.

The Palestinians will hopefully choose a better way for fighting the occupation and the degrading of human life, Internation support is needed and those who support the palestinian cause are always welcomed by me.

Sincerely,  
A.

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## Discussion topic posts “Palestinian Christians”

**Palestinian christians**

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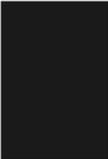


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**Topic: Palestinian christians** [Delete Topic](#) | [Reply to Topic](#)

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[Stephanie Denny Jones](#) wrote  
on Apr 27, 2008 at 9:09 AM

Forgive me if this has been asked or discussed already -- I've skimmed a lot of the comments but have only fully read certain chains. My mom has a friend who is a Palestinian christian. This friend lived in Israel and was shunned by the Israelis for being Palestinian. This friend was also shunned by the Palestinians for being christian. Is her case uncommon or are Palestinian christians not widely accepted?

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## Discussion topic posts “Education”

### Not enough education



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**Topic: Not enough education** | [Delete Topic](#) | [Reply to Topic](#)

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**[Redacted]** wrote  
on Apr 20, 2008 at 10:20 PM

I think that the media is fairly biased, but it is just because we only report on things that are newsworthy. Unfortunately, all the newsworthy things are usually bad acts performed on both sides. We need to get the good and positive stories out to the media. Sometimes I think the world associates all of the American people by American celebrities. When other countries hear about the acts of Paris Hilton and Britney Spears, we seem like a joke. And when I hear about the constant conflict overseas, I wonder why both sides can't just make peace. There is just such misunderstanding. There is more to the conflict then most Americans know. We need to be educated about it as to why it goes on. There needs to be more education for us early on. I think our schools should address a lot of this history.

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Post #1

## Discussion topic posts “Palestinians’ and American’s view of God (Allah)”

### Palestinians' and Americans' views of God (or Allah)



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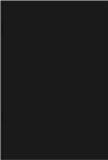
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#### Topic: **Palestinians' and Americans' views of God (or Allah)**

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  (Los Angeles, CA) wrote  
on Apr 10, 2008 at 7:29 PM

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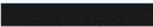
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I'm an American with an undergraduate degree in history and political science, but I focused mostly on the U.S., Africa and Latin America. I am also the son of a minister and am about to go to law school in August. I wanted to find out if there are differences in how both Americans' and Palestinians' view God (or Allah) and the role that they feel religion should play in the political process.

I personally believe strongly in the separation of church and state because I think too many times people have used political power to force their own religious views on others. I believe God calls us to love all those around us, regardless of their religious beliefs, even if we disagree strongly with them. Saying that, I also believe strongly that it is important to make faith a big part of our political lives (in a way that causes us to work out our differences with one another). I also believe our leaders should have strong morals and convictions in order to make fair and just decisions and do what is right and not what is expedient.

I have a close relationship with God and see Him as compassionate and merciful, but I also know that I will not be able to access His compassion and mercy if I openly reject Him.

I would be interested in learning about the faith of others (both American and Palestinian, Christian, Jewish, Muslim and others as well). I also want to hear how people feel about the role religion should play in politics and maybe some of the problems it has caused in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

  (Tulsa) wrote  
on Apr 11, 2008 at 8:11 AM

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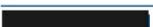
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An interesting topic. I was raised Catholic on the east coast and now live in the Bible Belt where religion is a much greater part of public life.

I too think that there should be a strong separation of church and state, but that is not the overwhelming view here in Oklahoma.

I believe a person's relationship with God is a very personal thing.

  (Utrecht) wrote  
on Apr 12, 2008 at 5:38 AM

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Dear All,

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Religion has certainly been a dimension in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however, it is not the reason of why this conflict is there. I myself was raised not to believe in any particular religion, however, back in Palestine you are considered a muslim even if you openly say that you are an atheist. If you come from islamic background then you are considered to be a muslim. I think that perception should change in the palestinian society and that a lot of social change or as i tend to label a cultural revolution should happen. What i mean by a cultural revolution is the acceptance and tolerance of the other in Palestine. For example, if you would like to drink alcohol, or would like to engage in pre-marital sex, or would like etc etc etc it should be your own personal choice and society should not play as judgmental instrument in which those who do such things are demonized and are outcaste from society.

The perception of women needs to change, the perception of gays and other minority groups needs to change, however, this needs to come from society itself and not from the west. The influence of the West can only be by Ideas and intellectual dialogue but can not be by force like what happens in Iraq. This needs to come from people like me and others who believe in tolerance and freedom and who are ready to fight for it. But yet again our failure in society is not because we are few, or no one really sees it that way, it is because of the role that U.S plays and the West in General plays in the middle-east. This role ruins it for us, because if you give it time and you work on it. I truly believe that such a cultural revolution may happen and may surprise the World, but with every fallen victim in Iraq, Palestine and the whole entire Islamic world this dream that i have becomes harder and harder to realize and dream of those who believe in the Islamization becomes easier and much more popular. '

Religion is good for some and i am fine with it, however, when it becomes an instrument of politics then the danger of it arises.

Sincerely,  
A.

 (Palestine) wrote  
on Apr 12, 2008 at 11:14 AM

I agree with many of the views expressed so far whether from Palestinians or Americans. If we truly believe in God then we should believe that all God's children are equal regardless to who follows what religion. This means that we are all God's creation and we should do everything in our power to preserve one another... rather than hate or kill each... or slowly create myths and prejudices. I am sure that God looks at us and is disappointed with how many of us have used his name to justify things He does not stand for.

Many in the West have the wrong assumption that religion is the cause of the conflict in Palestine. IT IS NOT. Purely political... but God's name has been used to justify agendas...agendas that bring destruction.

Those of us who believe in God should start saying "Not in His name"... The same like Christians say to Christian Zionists "Not in our name"... the same way some Americans tell their government "not in our name".

God is not a slogan to be displayed but a life to be lived....  
:) 

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 wrote  
on Apr 12, 2008 at 11:52 AM

Helloz!

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4 replies

Well I'm muslim, practicing, seriously I strongly disagree with you guys. The way I see Islam is my life style, what really I am. In other words its my ID!  
However, I respect all the people from all the races,because Allah (sw) tells me so. Islam and politics can't be separated, but that doesn't mean that I support Osama Ben Laden, that guy is the biggest insult to Islam. But the way I see it, any Muslim country should practice islamic rules or (Share'aa) even in its political system. Because as I said Islam is a life style, flexible enough to suit the changes we live in. :)

[Delete Post](#)

 (Los Angeles, CA) replied to 

on Apr 12, 2008 at 9:37 PM

I actually agree with quite a bit of what has already been said. I agree that society should not be judgmental of people based on their own personal choices. God gives eveyone free will, and we all have the ability to make our own individual decisions about whether we drink alcohol excessively, engage in pre-marital sex or engage in homosexual activities.

I agree that society should not demonize people who make such decisions, but I also do not think society should openly accept or condone any of the above three behaviors either. I strongly believe that people should not practice hate or carry out injustices against people who make these decisions. Too many times people use the name of God or Allah to justify discrimination and violence. Christians, Muslims and Jews should all stand up and say, "Not in the name of our God."

I believe we are all God's creation, and as a Christian, I am called to love everyone equally and that all of God's creation deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. I do not, however, believe that we are all God's children. God lays out pretty specifically the requirements for being a child of God, which actually is not that difficult in my opinion, but I also do not feel like it is my place to decide who is or isn't a child of God. The Bible says we should work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, which I do. I pray every day for God's grace in my life because I am just as much a sinner as anybody else, and I open myself up to God's wrath and judgment when I fail to be compassionate and merciful to others.

If you all could comment on my beliefs, I'd really appreciate it. I know I still have a lot to learn and don't claim to know everything about how God thinks or how bestows His mercy and judgment on people. Thanks.

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 (Utrecht) replied to 

on Apr 13, 2008 at 5:51 AM

Lina i am sorry to let you know that Islam is true for you and many others, however, not for every palestiniain and certinaley not for me. I personally do not see a problem with you abiding by sharia law etc... however, i see the problem of you saying that i should. Its your own personal thing so do not and try to impose it on me. Furthermore, i think that some of the sharia law has to be adjusted to the world today like cutting off hands, stoning those who comitt adultery, or chopping of heads. This is simply inhumane. Islam has the capacity to move forward and to be more progressive.

Yet again you can not say that Islam is a life style for everyone even profit mohammad knew that, it is life style for those who like it and those who which to abide by it but it is not a lifestyle for me and you should not try to impose it on society or the minority of

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society who simply does not want it.

Thanks and regards,  
A.

replied to  
on Apr 13, 2008 at 6:59 AM

Well I totally respect your point of view. But what I meant is that Islam can be practiced in law. The way I see it is that a better society needs the best laws, and who could ever give you better law than Allah the almighty and the prophet Mohamed (pbuh)? Have you ever thought why the adultery is prevented in Islam? Because Islam wants us to have a better life, because the ramifications of such act are huge, so Islam wants you have the best life you can ever have. That's all :)  
Again it's my point of view

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(Utrecht) replied to  
on Apr 13, 2008 at 7:31 AM

Believe i do respect your point of view, however, personally i see nothing sinful with adultery or anything immoral. But i guess we will have to agree to disagree on this point.

My point of view is that if people want to abide by isalmic, christain or jewish laws then they should, however, these laws should be in the context of a secular state that sets a system for those who are muslim and believe in Islam to live by Islamic law and those who are christain live based on a chroistain law and those who are secular or simply athiests to live by state law that certianley has some shared moral values with religion but does not implment religious law on everyone.

Sincerely,  
A.

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replied to  
on Apr 13, 2008 at 10:03 AM

This is an interesting topic. I personally think a strong separation of church and state is crucial for insuring that people are free to practice their beliefs, whatever they may be. Separation of church and state should also mean that religion isn't dictating government action. But politically, I would say religion is a big issue here. All the candidates make a point of openly expressing their religious affiliations, and I don't know of an openly atheist candidate.

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replied to  
on Apr 14, 2008 at 6:25 PM

This thread seems to be attracting some interesting views. This is my first post. I'm an American who never really thinks too much about a higher power. Haven't been to a church of any kind since I was five.

That said, I think I do have something to add here. My beloved girlfriend is a Bosnian Muslim. She has always resented the U.S. and its role in Israel. She may not be an arab muslim, but she understands the hardships of living in oppression, much as she did under the murderous rule of Slobodan Milosevic and his Serbian thugs. She lost a brother and spent two weeks in a concentration camp.

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As a secularist, I've always nurtured the somewhat wistful fantasy that humans could value respect over rites. All major religions carry the same tones of just treatment and moral behavior. Our geographic location, language or style of dress should do little to change this. Unfortunately, my fantasy is only a fantasy.

My girlfriend no longer covers her head, though I've encouraged her to wear a headscarf (I think they can be flattering). What I don't understand is how some muslims deny human rights to women, among them the rights to expression, speech and property ownership. I know customs vary from place to place and not all arabs support these restrictions, but the world is not for man alone.

---

██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 15, 2008 at 12:33 AM

I agree with you about 2 things, that all religions share the same view regarding moral issues, I believe that "lying" for example is something really horrible in all religions. And about that some Muslims deny rights to women, because simply they don't understand their own religion. Because, Islam gives women freedom of expression and the property, but I guess some men are just too arrogant and envious to accept the idea that a woman can be good as a man in something!

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██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 15, 2008 at 8:12 AM

I grew up with Muslims (in Mississippi, of all places, so you can't make too many assumptions about what you think of a place before you go there). I watched some of the teenage girls really struggle with how to balance their own religion and American customs. Would they cover their heads or wear American-style clothes or do some of both? Would they marry a Muslim? Would they follow their fathers' decisions about where they would go to college and who they would marry? These all seemed like very tough choices for women who were devout but found themselves caught between cultures. I'd like to know more about women and Islam, and if young women in Palestine face any of these issues?

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██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 15, 2008 at 11:25 AM

Well in general, we don't face such problems especially when it comes to wearing head scarf, the majority of girls here wear it at young age and most of them out of their free wills not like their parents forced them. I wore it at age of 15 and it was totally my call. Maybe the marriage thing has the parents influence but most of families these days let the girls decide but also you find some parents just force their daughters to marry who they want, but this ain't Islamic. Personally, I've an open minded family, they let me decide what I want and what I don't want, but within limits and I see its right, because they want what is best for me.

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██████████ (Utrecht) replied to ██████████  
on Apr 16, 2008 at 8:44 AM

Well i think that most women in Palestine as lina already said wear it as a choice but sometimes its a convenient choice like it is likely that if someone has been raised in the west not to chose that because that would be the inconvenient choice. However, Islam before 1400 years gave women rights that no one in the west at

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that time dreamed of, but the matter of fact is that the traditional Islamic outlook remained the same as it was 1400 years because Islam is a religion not limited in time or space. Mainly, most Muslims nowadays do have their own way of coping with a changing world and changing values and changing societies, which is true for most Muslims especially the more well-off ones. But the truth remains that we expect more devotion from a woman, more sacrifice and more traditional values. A guy who commits adultery is not looked upon like a girl who does that and it might not be Islam's fault but it is justified through religion. Women get paid less in doing the same work even if they are better in doing it which holds for the west as well. Women are expected to raise the children, take care of the household and at the same time sacrifice her care, on the other hand men are looked at as the providers. Women are still not equal, no divorce rights, those who divorce are looked down upon. Those who remain unmarried until 30 or so are also looked down upon etc etc. Women remain in the background

██████████ (Utrecht) replied to ██████████  
on Apr 16, 2008 at 8:46 AM

which holds for the west. I believe that there is a middle-way that most people utilize these days between the changing society and Islam and it actually works well, but that is not out there and outspoken in the Palestinian society like it should.

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██████████ wrote  
on Apr 21, 2008 at 2:38 PM

I mostly agree with ██████████ and ██████████ in their beliefs.

I also think that Christians face many struggles between keeping up with modern culture and remaining constant in scriptural beliefs, similar to what Muslims face. We may not always have the same issues that we are dealing with, but the overall situation is the same.

I think it is the biggest source of division within the Christian church in America. We label "fundamental," "liberal," "traditional," "modern," etc, and all of these labels are meant to describe how each church interprets the Bible and responds to cultural beliefs and pressures. Are there such divisions within Islam, or is there a consensus? I think Jews have similar divisions of more modern or traditional synagogues, but I don't know much about it. Anyone who would like to tell me more about it is most welcome to.

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## Discussion topic posts “Racism in Palestine?”

### Racism in Palestine?

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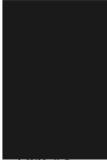


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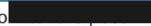
 wrote  
on Apr 20, 2008 at 9:07 PM

I just had a discussion on race and racism in a psychology class, and it got me thinking about racism in other countries and cultures. Issues with race seem to be very prevalent in the US. It's a hot topic and sometimes gets swept under the rug, but it is something that a lot of people still deal with on a daily basis. I was wondering what, if any, kind of racial tension existed within Palestine. Is it talked about openly or hushed because it's too difficult to talk about?

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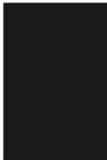
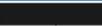
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 replied to   
on Apr 20, 2008 at 11:28 PM

I don't think we have racism based on color or gender, if there's it's very minor that it's not noticed. But I guess after 2005 elections people in Palestine are being judged according to their faction loyalty, for example, if you are Hamas you are religious and very good person with a beard and if you are Fatih you are a traitor. We have it in Gaza, but most of people don't like it, it's more like some individuals of each faction. But it shouldn't be there at all!!!

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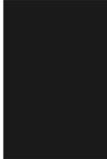
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 (Utrecht) replied to   
on Apr 21, 2008 at 6:02 AM

Well, i do not think that racism does not exist, you can notice a certain kind of discrimination in some sectors aganist christains and christains aganist muslims. But it is not severe.

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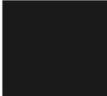
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 replied to   
on Apr 21, 2008 at 2:13 PM

Speaking of the discrimination– do people of different faiths interact with each other very much? I know it's hard to generalize, I don't know how I would answer that question for America. People of the same belief often hang out together because of being in religious groups or going to services together and becoming friends. But I would also say that people of different faiths spend time together. I'm Christian, but I have friends who are Jewish, Muslim, Atheist, no religion at all, etc. But probably most of my closest friends are Christians.

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 replied to   
on Apr 21, 2008 at 2:17 PM

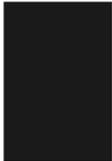
Also, do most people think of religion positively in Palestine? It

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seems like in America, even though a lot of people are religious, the culture values either being secular-avoiding religion all together- or keeping your religion to yourself. Displaying your religion too much can make people look down on you or think you are intolerant and trying to make everyone agree with you. At least that's what it seems like to me. What do others think?

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[\[Redacted\]](#) replied to [\[Redacted\]](#)  
on Apr 23, 2008 at 8:46 PM

Well in Palestine Muslims and Christians interact in every walk of life, we respect them and so they do. Plus, there's Muslim/Christian unity against the occupation, so this makes the relationship very strong. I've a Christian friend, I love her so so much, and we were together at high school. In Gaza, for example, people look up to religious people, I do! My friend is very religious, so I always look up to her and I wish I was like her.

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## Discussion topic posts “Dating/Relationships/Marriage”

### Dating/Relationships/Marriage



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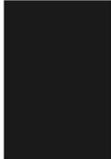
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#### Topic: [Dating/Relationships/Marriage](#)

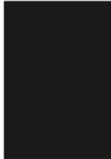
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 wrote  
on Apr 21, 2008 at 2:51 PM

This might show my ignorance, but I don't really know how dating and romantic relationships work in Palestine. Do most people date before getting married, or do they court? And do they date mostly one person for a long time, or date lots of different people? Also, at what age do most Palestinians start having romantic/dating relationships and what is the typical age for marriage?

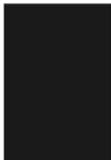
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 wrote  
on Apr 21, 2008 at 2:53 PM

Also, how is divorce viewed in Palestine? Is it common, and is it accepted or looked down on? Why do you think people usually get divorced?

I'd of course like to hear opinions and experiences on all these questions from Americans too, because I know we are not all the same.

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 wrote  
on Apr 21, 2008 at 3:03 PM

Personally, I've been "dating" my boyfriend for a little over 7 years. I use the term dating loosely, because when we first got together we were only 13 and weren't allowed to date yet. We just called ourselves a couple and hung out at school and in big groups, and talked on the phone a lot. Once we turned 16 and could drive we were able to start actually going out on dates. I think a 7 year commitment is pretty unusual in America, especially at our age.

I'm 20 and am starting to have friends close to my age getting married and even starting to have kids. But most people I know my age want to at least wait til they are done with college and around 22 or 23 to get married and start a family.

My parents got divorced when I was about 9 or so, and they both got remarried about a year ago. I would have to say I accept it because it is a part of my everyday life, but I personally think divorce is a horrible thing and is always wrong for at least one if not both of the spouses. I think that I would fight to make my marriage work no matter what, but it is hard to say what you would do in a situation until you have actually experienced it. I love both of my step parents and think they are a good thing that has come out of a bad situation.

I think marriage and divorce and relationships in general are treated far too lightly in America. People do not care about

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commitment anymore and I believe it is damaging to individuals and to society as a whole.

██████████ wrote  
on Apr 22, 2008 at 10:02 AM

I'm also very interested to see how relationships work in Palestine. I've been dating my boyfriend for three years now. We met our freshman year in college and have continued to date. I want to wait at least until I graduate to get engaged and married. Why rush things?

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██████████ (Utrecht) wrote  
on Apr 22, 2008 at 4:04 PM

Well it works in different way, the conservative nature of the society makes it impossible to have a normal relationship, no public affection, no meeting girls in bars, no clubs etc.... all of the ways that most americans have are pretty much rare in palestine....however, people alternatively use msn, mobile, skype etc.... to be in touch and to talk to each other....

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██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 23, 2008 at 8:37 PM

Very nice question!  
Well it's like previously said, it's very very different!  
Actually, there is an old fashioned way, this when the mother of the guy who has desire to be married, ask people (relatives, neighbors and friends) if they know families who have pretty girls. Step 2 after they get the address of a family that has pretty girls, this mom and his aunts; sometimes his sisters too, call this family take an appointment and go to their house. Step 3 they meet the girl, and then tell the guy about her, if he likes her, they meet and talk, if they like each others. Next day they get engaged and they life happily ever after.  
The modern way, the boy and the girl meet at work or somewhere the guy tells his mom also about this girl, the mom and her gang go to family house of the girl and ask for her hands, and they get engaged the next day.  
The old fashioned way is the most common here in Gaza and about the age of marriage here in Gaza, 23-25 for dudes and 17-23 for girls.  
I'm single, dating is not an option for me, because it's not accepted to me or to my family and for most to my religion. But you know I hope I get married the "modern" way.

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██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 24, 2008 at 11:15 AM

Wow, how interesting! Sometimes I think our society would benefit from less dating people met in bars and clubs and having lots of short, meaningless relationships. They often seem to cause more harm than good. But I also can't imagine getting engaged that quickly. It is certainly different. But there are people in America who do more of a courting thing, and choose one person to marry without ever dating anyone.

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██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 26, 2008 at 10:12 AM

I had an anthropology teacher as an undergrad who was a Hindu from India. While he was in graduate school here in the U.S., his

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parents picked out a girl for him to marry back home. He hopped on a plane, married her and brought her back here with him when he returned. They have been happily married for over 30 years. Of course, we thought it was kind of crazy, but as he explained it, your elders know what's best for you, so why wouldn't they pick out a good marriage partner for you?

I personally couldn't imagine letting someone else (even my parents) pick out a man for me, but it would make things much simpler! I think a big problem with American society is that many people don't view marriage as a commitment. It's so easy to get a divorce that some people don't really think things through. And called me old-fashioned, but I think it might help if more guys had to ask a girl's father permission to date/marry her. A lot of people I know still do that out of respect, but they are the minority in the nation.

██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 26, 2008 at 6:42 PM

Yeah, it seems weird to imagine someone picking out your spouse for you but really, it shouldn't be that hard. And the Palestinian way seems like it might work pretty well. I mean, either you're attracted, physically to someone or you're not. Looks aren't everything, for sure, but there needs to be a basic physical attraction. 2. Do you have reasonably similar likes and interests? Do you like to spend time with the person, more or less? If so, that's really about it. If you're with someone for 30 years, you're not going to be the same person you were when you met, so you should just hope that each person is reasonable enough to allow growth to happen together. There it is, relationships, easy peasy. Thanks, Dr. Phil

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██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 26, 2008 at 9:18 PM

I think you're exactly right. That's really what counts in the long run, is how well you can tolerate each other. I've been with my fiancé for 7 years, so I speak from a little bit of experience, haha! I think too many people expect crazy passionate romance and when that doesn't happen or fizzles out, they give up. But for a long-term relationship you need a good companion, first and foremost. It does seem like the Palestinian way would work well in the regard. :)

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██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 27, 2008 at 4:19 AM

Well you guys called it the Palestinian way, it's the muslim/arab way. In most of the arab countries marriage occurs this way. And yea the majority work!

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██████████ wrote  
on Apr 27, 2008 at 9:05 AM

How taboo would it be to marry a Christian for a Palestinian Muslim? I have a friend who is half Egyptian-half American with a muslim father and christian mother.

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██████████ replied to ██████████  
on Apr 27, 2008 at 8:04 PM

Well A muslim male can marry a christian or a jew..

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but a muslim female can't marry a non-muslim :)

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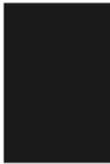
replied to

on Apr 27, 2008 at 8:06 PM

That makes since... Islam is carried on through the male, right? While Judism is through the female and Christianity...well we don't really care!

So is that looked upon as acceptable then? or is it not prefered?

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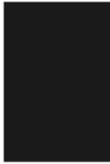


replied to

on Apr 27, 2008 at 8:39 PM

Yes, it is accepted, I don't think that one day I'll be married to a non-Muslim man. I don't even think about. But when guys marry a Christian, you rarely find Muslims married to jewes , it's accepted. I've cousins married Christian women, and it's totally cool.

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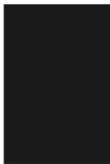
on Apr 28, 2008 at 5:33 PM

Maybe I will sound very intolerant here, but I personally think it is a bad idea to marry outside your faith, no matter what your faith is or what country you are in.

My reasoning is that faith is a very important influence on a person's life. It determines how they will raise their children, how they will run their household, and in my opinion, their very way of thinking and responding to situations that arise in life. A husband and wife should work together on all these things, and if they have a different faith, it could cause many conflicts and hardships. How will the children be raised--which faith will they be taught?

That's just my opinion. What do you guys think?

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replied to

on Apr 28, 2008 at 5:46 PM

I think it's easier when both people have the same faith, but I have a lot of friends who are products of Muslim-Christian, or Jewish-Christian parents. Several of them were raised learning both faiths and allowed to choose between them. Others were raised in one and studied the other when they were older. The interesting thing with religions is the big three religions intertwine and have a lot more similarities than most think. Most of my friends who come from this situation talk about the similarity, not the conflict. So while I think it's easier to marry within faith I think it can produce more open-minded and spiritual children.

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