CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MIDDLE EAST:

THREE ESSAYS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses one of the central concerns of the social sciences, the relationship between social formations and psychological processes. It does so by: a) describing differences in the psychological functioning of individuals located in Middle Eastern and North American socio-cultural contexts; and b) linking this variation to specific features of the Middle Eastern and North American socio-cultural systems. I offer three essays on the socio-cultural psychology of the Middle East, each exploring a different set of cognitive, emotional and motivational processes. The first essay describes culture-specific forms of reasoning about complex political and military events. A series of studies demonstrate that individuals in Middle Eastern settings tend to locate the cause of an event in particular individuals or groups rather than in impersonal or social factors. The second essay examines the motivations to conform and to self-enhance. Four studies demonstrate that individuals in the Middle East exhibit a constellation of psychological tendencies not observed in the prototypical collectivist and individualist cultures of East Asia and North America, namely self-enhancement and a preference for conformity. The third essay explores cultural variation in the tendency to feel emotions in response to events which affect others but not oneself. Three studies support the hypothesis that individuals in Middle Eastern settings tend to experience such emotions more frequently and intensely than do North Americans and in response to different types of events. Each essay describes the macro- and meso-level features of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system likely to foster these culture-specific modes of psychological functioning and considers implications of the findings presented here for our understanding of the Middle Eastern social and political landscape.

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INTRODUCTION

O mankind!   We created you...and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (*and not that you may despise each other*).

--Quran 49:13

The three essays presented here offer the first attempt to systematically describe differences in the cognitive, emotional and motivational processes of individuals located in Middle Eastern and North American socio-cultural contexts.[1] Common to all three essays is the claim that in the Middle East a widely-held and deeply-rooted constellation of beliefs and values concerning the self and social relationships—which I term *qaraba* ("closeness")--organizes and regulates psychological processes. The

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[1] Here the term *the Middle East* and its cognates refer to the nation-states of North Africa, the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.   Despite their readily apparent diversity (e.g. in political institutions, physical ecology, level of economic development and degree of "Westernization"), there is good reason for regarding these several states as a single discrete socio-cultural system. From an etic perspective all share the same language, dominant religious system, materially similar social practices and a common historical trajectory (Amin 1985; Barakat 19993; Bates and Rassam 2002). Emically, survey data indicates that individuals throughout the region regard themselves as participants in a common culture (Hopkins and Ibrahim 1985; Pintak 2009).   The strength and centrality of this sense of *al-huwiya al-`arabiya* ("Arab [collective] identity") is evident in the pervasiveness and enduring popularity of social movements seeking to unite the many states of the Middle East into a single nation (Hammond 2007; Rogan 2010).   There is some diversity of scholarly, and perhaps popular, opinion concerning the boundaries of this socio-cultural system.   Some scholars conceive of a single culture area embracing not only the Middle East, but also Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan (e.g. Eickelman 1998; Bates and Rassam 2001; Lindholm 2002).   Others consider *al-`alam al-`arabi*, the Arab world, to be distinct from Central Asia (e.g. Barakat 1993; Rogan 2010).   There is a clear consensus, however, that the Middle East, as I have delimited it, constitutes the core of a socio-cultural *sui generis*.

individual is held to be inseparable from the social environment, linked to others through relationships of negotiable hierarchy. A "good" person, in the cultural sense, must be both connected to and dominant over others. *Qaraba* both directly influences the ways in which individuals think, feel and act and also scaffolds institutions, practices and products which are themselves generative of culture-specific modes of psychological functioning.

The first essay, "'Who Created the Swine Flu…and the Financial Crisis:' Reasoning About Complex Political Events in the Middle East and North America," explores the ways in which individuals in Middle Eastern settings tend to explain political and military episodes. Using content analyses and laboratory studies I demonstrate that Middle Easterners are more likely than North Americans to generate and endorse *personal attributions* for complex political and military events, i.e. to locate the cause of events in particular individuals or groups rather than in impersonal or social factors. This tendency may explain—at least in part—why, despite mass dissatisfaction with authoritarian regimes, the Arab reform movement has failed to garner popular support for democratization.

The second essay, "'Neither East nor West:' *Qaraba*, self-enhancement and conformity," examines the question of whether the constructs of individualism and collectivism are usefully applied to the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system. In a series of studies conducted in Oman and the US I show that individuals in the Middle East tend to exhibit a constellation of motivational tendencies not observed in the prototypical collectivist and individualist cultures of East Asia and North America, namely self-enhancement *and* a preference for conformity. These findings lead to a

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discussion of how Western policy-makers and analysts might interpret the speech and actions of their Middle Eastern counterparts.

The third essay, "'Tears for Husayn:' Allocentric emotion in the Middle East and North America," explores cultural variation in other-oriented or allocentric emotion, i.e. the affective states an individual feels in response to events involving someone other than the individual herself. I suggest that *qaraba* and other elements of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system are likely to foster allocentric emotion. A series of studies conducted in Yemen and the US demonstrate that Middle Easterners tend to experience allocentric emotions more frequently and intensely than do North Americans, and in response to different types of antecedent events and social actors. These findings might be usefully applied to efforts to understand and reduce active participation in and passive support for violent extremism.

This research advances scholarship on cultural variation in psychological functioning in three ways. First, it broadens the empirical scope of extant research. Over the past few decades social scientists have devoted considerable attention to elucidating how and why psychological functioning varies across socio-cultural systems. Almost all of this research, however, has been located in North American and East Asian settings. Eighty percent of articles on socio-cultural variation in psychological processes published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* between January 2000 and October 2008 contained only North American and East Asian comparanda; the figure is 83% for *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* over the same time period. Similarly, 86% of index entries concerning specific cultures in the recently published *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*

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(Kitayama and Cohen 2007) referenced either North American or East Asian societies, as did 78% of index entries in a recently published advanced undergraduate/graduate text, *Social Psychology of Culture* (Chiu and Hong 2007). Research by sociologists is similarly limited. A search of the bibliographic database Sociological Abstracts revealed no studies on social structure and personality conducted outside of North America, Europe or Japan. Sociological critiques of socio-cultural psychology, e.g. Yamagishi et al. (2008), have also thus far situated their research only in North American and East Asian settings.

Second, rather than attributing cultural variation in psychological processes to the broad and somewhat nebulous constructs of individualism and collectivism, the research presented here the dissertation offers a relatively thick description of the macro-, meso-, and micro-level elements of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system which shape cognition, emotion and motivation. This focus on the specific features of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system yields novel insights into the principles governing the relationship between social formations and psychological functioning and adds to the range of psychological processes demonstrated to vary across socio-cultural systems.

Third, the research presented here may be of considerable practical importance. Social scientists, policymakers and laypersons clearly recognize that *what* people think and feel differs across cultures, but may assume, implicitly at least, that *how* people think and feel does not. Each of the three essays explores not only how features of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system shape modes of psychological functioning, but also how culture-specific modes of psychological functioning shape features of the

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Middle Eastern socio-cultural system, specifically the political landscape. Culture-specific modes of psychological functioning are, as adumbrated above, likely to influence the popular appeal of political ideologies, the flow of information within military command structures, and participation in violent extremist movements. The essays which follow might thus usefully inform the efforts of analysts and policymakers concerned with the Middle East.

ESSAY 1
"WHO CREATED THE SWINE FLU…AND THE FINANCIAL CRISIS:"
REASONING ABOUT COMPLEX POLITICAL EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST
AND NORTH AMERICA

As the swine flu spread throughout the globe in the spring of 2009 so too did speculation concerning the causes of the pandemic: why had this previously unknown and deadly pathogen suddenly appeared and how was it able to move from country to country so swiftly?[2] In North America mainstream media accounts suggested that the unexpected emergence of the disease was due to the dynamic relationship between viruses and their hosts (e.g. W McNeil 2009), while its rapid spread was attributable to the volume and pattern of global travel and commerce (e.g. White 2009). Such epidemiological factors also featured in the reportage of the mainstream media in the Middle East. But in that region media discourse on the swine flu also emphasized—to an extent perhaps surprising to North American observers—the causal role of particular individuals and groups. Some accounts of the pandemic suggested that pharmaceutical companies had created the virus in order to increase demand for their products (e.g. al-Dakhil 2009; al-Arabiya 2009; al-Jazeera 2010). Others diagnosed the outbreak as an act of biological warfare, variously described as an attack on the Muslim world perpetrated by the US (e.g. MEMRI 2009a) or Israel (e.g. MEMRI 2009b), an attack on pro-Western regimes in the region perpetrated by al-Qa`ida (e.g. Kalyoncu 2009), and an attack on Arab Christians—whose livelihoods are in some areas dependent on raising the eponymous swine—perpetrated by Arab Muslims (Islameyat.com 2009).   One comes away from a reading of mainstream media

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[2] The title quote appears in MEMRI 2009c.

accounts with the strong impression that those generated in North America tended to explain the epidemic in terms of adventitious biological and social processes whereas those generated in the Middle East tended to explain it in terms of particular actors.[3]

The existence of this marked difference in North American and Middle Eastern explanatory accounts of the same set of events naturally begs the question of why this should be the case. It is of course conceivable that Middle Eastern and North American media outlets varied in their knowledge of the actual causes of the swine flu outbreak, e.g. that Middle Eastern reporters were aware of some underlying reality which North American reporters were not. Decades of social psychological research, however, suggest that this difference is more likely to flow from the interaction between culture and cognition. Human beings are not passive registers of objective cause and effect relationships, but rather actively construct the meaning of events (Hastorf and Cantril 1954; Ross and Nisbett 1991). The socio-cultural system in which individuals are located exercises a profound influence on this process (Miller

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[3] Although explanations of the swine flu epidemic emphasizing the role of particular social actors also appeared in the North American media, at least two substantive qualitative differences distinguish these from their Middle Eastern counterparts. First, and most importantly, this type of discourse appeared in prestigious, mainstream media outlets in the Middle East (Tishreen and IRINN are government-sponsored news organizations in Syria and Iraq; al-Arabiya and al-Jazeera are the two leading pan-Arab satellite news channels), but tended to be relegated to the margins in North America, i.e. appearing only on relatively obscure websites and blogs. The mainstream media in North America, moreover, tended to describe such ideation in highly dismissive terms (e.g. Fealty 2009; Kozlowski 2009). Second, Middle Eastern accounts tended to identify social actors as the root cause of the epidemic, whereas North American accounts tended for the most part to take the natural origins of the outbreak for granted and instead dwell on the governmental response to the outbreak, e.g. claiming that swine flu vaccinations would in some fashion allow the US to track the movements of its citizens (Torrey 2009).

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1984; Nisbett 2003). As individuals engage with a particular socio-cultural system—internalizing its dominant beliefs, participating in its institutions, and consuming its products—they may come to attend to some features of the environment more than to others, to acquire and apply theories about how the world works, and to regard certain types of explanation as especially plausible and satisfying (Norenzayan et al. 2007; Heine 2008).

The present research thus explores the ways in which the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system shapes causal reasoning, focusing, in particular, on the ways in which individuals in natural—as opposed to laboratory or experimental—settings explain complex political and military episodes.[4, 5] It extends scholarship on the relationship between the social and the psychological in two directions. First, this study represents one of the first applications of the "socio-cultural approach" (Markus and Hamedani 2007: 7) to the Middle East, a region which has only rarely been the object of research by social and cultural psychologists.[6] Second, the emphasis on the explanation of complex political and military events marks an advance on past research on cultural variation in reasoning, which has for the most part examined only

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[4] Here the term *the Middle East* and its cognates refer to the nation-states of North Africa, the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq. I provide a rationale for this definition/delimitation in the "Introduction."

[5] The term *causal reasoning* here has the "everyday, informal, natural language sense" of beliefs about the factors responsible for or generative of a particular event or state (Schustack 1988: 35). Causal reasoning may concern "why" and/or "how" an event or state occurs (Keil 2006). For the sake of euphony I use the terms *causal reasoning*, *causal account*, *explanatory account* and *causal explanation* interchangeably throughout this paper.

[6] See the second essay in this series, "Neither East nor West: Self-enhancement and conformity in the Middle East" for a review of the extant social psychological literature on the Middle East.

"everyday social cognition," i.e. the explanation of comparatively simple quotidian occurrences.

The overarching claim of this article is that the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system fosters a propensity for *personalism* in the explanation of political and military episodes, i.e. a tendency to locate causality in particular social actors.[7] Complex social phenomena, e.g. the defeat of the Confederacy in the Civil War, are readily amenable to very different sorts of explanation. Reasonable, well-informed observers might adduce material factors, e.g. "A limited natural resource base caused the Confederacy to lose the Civil War," social/supra-individual factors, e.g. "Class conflict caused the Confederacy to lose the Civil War" or human factors, e.g. "General Lee caused the Confederacy to lose the Civil War" (cf. Coleman 1990). *Ceteris paribus*, individuals in Middle Eastern settings tend to favor the latter. The causal accounts generated in that socio-cultural context tend to emphasize the causal role of specific individuals or collectives—as discrete units rather than as elements of a system—and there is a corresponding inattention to impersonal or supra-individual forces. Simply stated, Middle Easterners tend to attribute events/states to some*one* rather than some*thing*. This claim is not an entirely novel one. The "Orientalist" scholar von Grunebaum, for example, maintained that "the Arab feels enemies,

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[7] Personalism is distinct from and orthogonal to the person-situation dichotomy. A causal attribution can be both *personal*, i.e. a particular personal agent causes some action performed by an actor, and *situational*, i.e. the relevant personal agent is not the actor herself. For example, the causal statement "General Lee lost the battle because of his lazy subordinates" is a personal and situational attribution; the causal statement "General Lee lost the battle because he was lazy" is personal and a person attribution. Heider (1958), it should be noted, used the terms *personal* and *impersonal* causality to distinguish between intentional and unintentional behavior.

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humiliations, triumphs where the Occidental makes allowances for material, objective, and in any event, impersonal difficulties" (1964: 176).[8] But it has never been subject to much scrutiny, rigorous or otherwise, nor has any substantive rationale been offered as to why causal reasoning in the Middle East should take this form. In first section of this article, therefore, I present a relatively thick description of those macro- and meso-scopic features of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system likely to shape causal reasoning. The second section substantiates the claim of Middle Eastern personalism through three studies of the explanations of complex political and military episodes generated by individuals in North America and the Middle East. I conclude with an exploration of the relationship between personalism and the failure of democratic reform movements in the Middle East to generate widespread popular support.

Socio-cultural Influences on Causal Reasoning in the Middle East

Figure 1 illustrates (some of) the paths through which the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system shapes the ways in which individuals in that setting think about the causes of political and military events. Kim and Markus (1999) suggest that "in many cultural contexts one may identify a set of ideas…that is foundational and that is expressed pervasively in many aspects of social life" (796). A constellation of beliefs and values concerning the self and social relationships which I will refer to as *qaraba* ("closeness," Eickelman 1998) certainly plays this role in the Middle Eastern socio-

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[8] Von Grunebaum was among the Arabists castigated by Said (1978) for creating a false understanding of the Middle East, one—in Said's view—reflective of and intended to legitimate Western dominance of that region.

cultural system (**see Table 1**).[9,10] The individual is held to be inseparable from the social environment, linked to others through relationships of negotiable hierarchy.[11] A "good" person, in the cultural sense, must be both connected to and dominant over others. *Qaraba* both directly influences the ways in which individuals think about why events occur and scaffolds institutions, practices and products which are themselves generative of culture-specific modes of causal reasoning.

Qaraba and causal reasoning

   Qaraba shapes perceptions of the world in such a way so as to foster personalism. The importance attached to states of connectedness and dominance greatly amplifies the salience of persons (as opposed to things or abstractions). The belief that connectedness and dominance come about through the active construction and negotiation of social ties focuses attention on the person as a causal agent.

   Qaraba promotes a chronic attention to the person. The paramount and omnipresent goals of connectedness and dominance are inherently person-focused (Sharabi 1977; Khuri 1990): "people," runs the Arab proverb, "are for people" (Barakat 1993: 201). An acute focus on the person is further requisite in that

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[9] Unless otherwise noted all translations of Arabic terms are those of Wehr (1994).

[10] The term, as it is used here, is something of a neologism. In the anthropological literature on the Middle East it refers to the quality of relationships within and between social units such as households, principally in tribal settings (e.g. Eickelman 1976, 1998). *Qaraba* is preferable to the term "collectivism," since that construct fails to capture important features of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system. It expresses the socio-centric or relationship-focused aspect of Middle Eastern culture, and is also a (minor) play on words, since the root *q-r-b* can mean, depending upon the context, both "to be in relation/close to someone," and "to clarify a concept" (s.v. Wehr 1994).

[11] A substantially more elaborated description of *qaraba* is found in the second article in this series, "Neither East nor West: Self-enhancement and conformity in the Middle East."

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connectedness and dominance goals often exist in tension with one another (Khuri 1990).[12] Individuals must successfully manage the competing inter-personal tasks of "trying to be first…[and] contradictorily try[ing] to create an atmosphere of closeness" (Khuri 1990: 27). Unsurprisingly, a number of spheres of human activity in the Middle East exhibit a greater attention to the person than that characteristic of the same domains in other socio-cultural systems. Legal systems in the Middle East traditionally recognized only concrete individuals; corporate and juridical persons (i.e. the state) could not be a party to judicial proceedings (Ruthven 2006). Sound jurisprudence, moreover, demands that a *qadi* (judge) weight factors such as the demeanor, social status and collective identities of litigants as heavily as the evidence presented to the court (Rosen 2000). In the realm of philosophy, medieval Middle Eastern thinkers rejected the assumption made by those in the West that abstract principles such as "Justice" existed apart from the divine person (Ruthven 2006). In the religious domain, as in others, knowledge is "seen less in terms of what is known than in terms of who knows it" (Rosen 2002: 111). Whether or not a deed or saying attributed to the prophet Muhammad enters the canon depends not on its substance, but rather on the *isnad* ("chain") of individuals who witnessed the incident and transmitted the report (Nasr 2002). The lineage (*silsila*) connecting an individual to particular saints or scholars is likewise determinative of authority in Sufi religious orders (Gilsenan 1982) and the Shi`ite clerical establishment (Mottahedeh 2009).

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[12] Ibn Khaldun, the pioneering 14th century social scientist, observed that although in the Middle East "everybody's affection for his family and his group is more important than anything else" (1967: 97), "there is scarcely one among them who would cede his power to another, even to his father, his brother or the eldest member of his family" (1967: 21).

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Everyday discourse also manifests the characteristic focus on the person. In response to the question of "what happened" Rosen's (2002) Moroccan informants tended to answer "in terms of persons, 'he said' and 'he did'…rather than sequences of events" (112). They also tended to perceive and discuss material objects (e.g. land) principally in terms of human relationships (e.g. ownership) rather than in terms of the objects' own attributes (Rosen 2008).

Qaraba not only directs attention to the person, but also constructs the person as a causal agent, for it is human effort that is held to produce the culturally-valued states of connectedness and dominance.[13] The mere existence of biological ties and shared identities is not—in the absence of the attempt to actively contract social relationships—considered sufficient to achieve connectedness (Lindholm 2002; Bates and Rassam 1998; Barakat 1993). Thus to establish and maintain connectedness with others individuals routinely create fictive kinship relationships and/or manipulate their use of kinship terms (Khuri 1990). Socially-adept actors also finesse their collective identities so as create bonds with others, e.g. adopting or emphasizing a particular

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[13] The notion that individuals in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system tend to be exceptionally "fatalistic," although widely broadcast (Western popular accounts of the Middle East: e.g. Baker 2003; Western social psychological research: Norenzayan et al. 2007; Middle Eastern social critics: e.g. Barakat 1993), is likely to be inaccurate. It is certainly the case that when confronted with unfortunate or displeasing events, the discourse of individuals in Middle Eastern contexts is often peppered with statements which seem to suggest resignation to fate, e.g. "It's in the hands of *Allah*" or *Allahu alam* ("Allah knows best"). Western perceptions of Middle Eastern fatalism, however, rest on a misapprehension of the force of these statements: they are assertions that no outcome is final and that Allah can dramatically alter the course of events, rather than statements of acquiescence (Rosen 1984). Middle Eastern observers, on the other hand, seem to adduce a cultural propensity for "fatalism" when the social, economic or political policies and programs which they advocate fail to garner popular support (Benabdallah 2009).

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nisba according to the social environment (Rosen 1984). [14]   Dominance, like connectedness, is perceived to be the outcome of human action.   Middle Eastern culture is characterized by an emphasis on the "moral equivalence" of individuals and the tendency to eschew hierarchies based on ascribed status (Lindholm 2002; Rosen 2008).   Middle Easterners typically understand dominance to be a function of imbalances in inter-personal obligations which they and others in the social environment create.[15]   Many forms of social interaction, ranging from the distribution of material largesse or assistance in obtaining a marriage partner to greetings in public spaces, generate obligational ties (Eickelman 1976; Rosen 1984, 2008).   The actor to whom a social debt is owed is super-ordinate to the one from whom repayment of the social debt is due; the former has *kalima* ("influence;" "authority") over the latter (Eickelman 1976).

Research in North American and East Asian contexts suggests that culture-specific understandings of the self and its relationship to others shape psychological processes (Kitayama et al. 2007).   This is likely to be the case in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system as well.   To the extent that individuals in this setting engage with the set of core values and beliefs which I have termed *qaraba*, they are likely to locate the cause of events and states in particular social actors rather than in impersonal, systemic or supra-individual factors.

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[14] The *nisba* is attached to an individual's given name and usually betokens ethnicity or national origin, though it can denote any personal attribute; it is more formal and ubiquitous than is the nickname in North American culture.

[15] Other actions, e.g. material and physical coercion and the threat of such coercion, can also establish and maintain relationships of dominance (e.g. Dwairy 1998 on the incidence of and attitudes towards corporal punishment in Middle Eastern schools).

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Middle Eastern meaning systems, products, practices and causal reasoning

Qaraba seems likely to shape causal reasoning in two additional ways. First, it influences the meaning systems and products which furnish individuals in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system with explicit accounts of why events/states occur. Islam, folk religion and the popular media in the Middle East tend to adduce persons to explain episodes which in other cultures tend to be explained in terms of impersonal or supra-individual factors. Second qaraba influences social practices in such a way that events which in other socio-cultural systems might be objectively attributable to impersonal factors, e.g. market forces, are in the Middle East objectively attributable to personal agents, e.g. a *wasit* (loosely, "someone with clout").

Allah. [16] Nisbett (2003) suggests that Aristotelian and Taoist metaphysics have shaped cognitive processes in Western and East Asian contexts, and one might posit a similar role for Islamic philosophy in the Middle East. Middle Eastern philosophers—influenced by "Islamic occasionalism," i.e. the belief that the universe is freely created by Allah at each moment—held that Allah is the direct cause of all events and states. Whenever, for example, a piece of cotton burns upon contact with a flame "the one who enacts the burning is God" (al-Ghazali 1997: 42). Unlike their Western counterparts, Middle Eastern thinkers held explanatory accounts which assign causality to impersonal forces, e.g. the chemical properties of cotton, to be in some sense fundamentally unsatisfactory (Marmura 1968). Although the audience for

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[16] For the purposes of the present discussion Allah may be considered a "person" in that "he" (e.g. Qur`an 7:57) possesses attributes which are otherwise characteristic of persons such as volition (e.g. Qur`an 36:38), knowledge (e.g. Quran 2:77), sight (e.g. Qur`an 4:58), hearing (e.g. Qur`an 58:1), and the capacity for love (e.g. Qur`an 4:42) and anger (e.g. Qur`an 9:68).

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philosophical discourse is likely to have been limited, the Qur`an and *hadith* offer readily accessible and widely known accounts of Allah's causal primacy. "With Allah rests the end and decision of all affairs" (Qur`an 31:22); events occur through his "decrees" and "determination" (Nasr 2002). The "cosmic verses" of the Qur`an describe Allah as the cause of a wide array of natural phenomena (Turner 1986).[17] Similarly, narratives of Allah's involvement in human history depict him as "regulating and governing all things" (Qur`an 10:3). The emphasis on Allah's direct role in fashioning the course of events is coupled with a corresponding tendency in Islamic thought to reject the role of chance or stochastic processes (Rodinson 2007).

Supernatural beings. [18] Saints, *djinn* ("genies"), and the evil eye feature in culturally normative causal accounts for a wide range of phenomena. Individuals from all socio-economic strata and of every level of educational attainment believe that djinn cause illness, both physical and mental, and success or failure in romantic relationships and business ventures (Drieskens 2006; Overbye and Glanz 2001). Accounts of djinn's role in human affairs appear with some regularity in contemporary

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[17] Belief that the Qur`an offers an accurate and scientifically valid picture of the natural world is far more prevalent in the Middle East than is the cognate belief concerning the Bible in the West (Nasr 2002). A prominent strand of Middle Eastern (and more broadly Islamic) scholarship has been devoted to reconciling the Qur'an and *hadith* (deeds and sayings of Muhammad and his followers) with contemporary science (al-Banna 2009; Ahmed 2002).

[18] As was proposed above with reference to Allah, for the purposes of this discussion saints, djinn and the evil eye may be regarded as persons: saints are human beings, living or dead, possessed of extraordinary powers; particular human actors are responsible for casting the evil eye (Spooner 1970); and djinn possess bodies (Qur`an 15:27), appetites and emotions (Drieskens 2006), and are capable of rational thought (Qur`an 46: 29-32).

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books, films, and newspaper articles (el-Zein 2009).[19] Like belief in *djinn*, belief in the evil eye (*al-ayn*) is both an element of Islamic orthodoxy (e.g. Qur`an 113: 5) and widespread (Spooner 1970).[20] The evil eye emanates from an individual when she or he feels envy and occasions harm to the person or thing which is envied (Spooner 1970; Drieskens 2006). It is a commonly asserted cause of infant/child mortality, failure in business or romance, and the loss or destruction of physical property (Drieskens 2006). Certain individuals are believed to be particularly likely to cast the evil eye and/or to possess an evil eye of exceptional strength (Spooner 1970). The saint (*waliyh*) serves as "a means…God is assumed to use in the regulation of all things" (Gilsenan 1972: 5). Saints are held to cause health and good fortune for those who believe, and conversely, to cause harm to those lacking in faith (Geertz 1968). Shrines at which saints are venerated are ubiquitous in the Middle East and individuals throughout the region seek their assistance and intervention (Eickelman 1976; Bates and Rassam 2001).

   Conspiracy theories. A conspiracy theory attributes some event/state to the covert, generally malevolent, actions of particular individuals or groups (Hofstadter 1964). In the Middle East conspiracy theories explain a striking range of phenomena. Poisoned belt buckles produced by Israel, for example, cause impotence among Egyptian men

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[19] At the time of writing, for example, Saudi newspapers (e.g. al-Nala 2010) are reporting the case of a 26-year old man who is possessed by a female *djinni* and must therefore be chained to his bed; a faith-healer, a religious scholar and a psychiatrist are, fortunately, attempting to cast the *djinni* out.

[20] Drieskens, for example, reports that *al-Ahram*, an Egyptian newspaper comparable in seriousness and prestige to the *New York Times*, published an article in 2000 claiming that "President Kennedy never wore shoes for fear of *hasad* [envy]," (2006: 72), i.e. in order to protect himself from the evil eye.

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(al-Bakr 2008); Islamists cause a rise in the price of cigarettes in order to discourage tobacco use (el-Saleh 2007); and Middle Eastern nations have suffered military defeats because leaders such as Saddam Hussein and King Hussein are in fact Jews or Western agents masquerading as Arabs (Abdel Salam 2008; Cook 2008). Relative to other socio-cultural systems, the ubiquity and popular acceptance of conspiracy theories in the Middle East appears to be exceptional (Moughrabi 1978; al-Ansari 2005). Conspiracy theories are a persistent feature of textbooks (al-Bakr 2008), mainstream newspapers and television programs (abdul-Anien 2008), and popular religious literature (Cook 2008; Elthahawy 2008). Some Middle Eastern social critics have suggested that their omnipresence is itself the product of a conspiracy: Middle Eastern rulers propagate conspiracy theories in order to divert attention from their own malfeasance and incompetence (abdul-Anien 2008).

Social practices. In many spheres of life the person may, in fact, tend to cause events/states to a greater extent and/or more overtly in the Middle East than is the case in other socio-cultural systems. The everyday experience of Middle Easterners with *wasta*, arranged marriage and political praxis is thus likely to foster personalism. "Everything," asserts an Iraqi proverb, "goes through *wasta* ("personal connection to gain something from someone")." Accomplishing even fairly routine tasks, e.g. obtaining a copy of a birth certificate (Singerman 1995), often requires an individual to secure the assistance of a *wasit*, someone positioned to exercise influence on her behalf (Cunningham and Sarayrah 1994). The *wasit* often plays a crucial, openly-acknowledged role in major life-events such as gaining entrance into a good university and securing a job (Arab Barometer Project 2006; Singerman 1995). Given the

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collective reality of *wasta*, one might more plausibly attribute the outcome of an encounter with a government institution, a university admissions office or a prospective employer to specific individuals, namely the *wasit* involved, than to impersonal forces such as "bureaucracy," "the admissions process" or "the job market." The practice of arranged marriage is likely to have similar consequences for causal reasoning. Many, perhaps most, marriages in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system come into being because family members and others, e.g. neighbors, friends and "brokers," have actively prospected for suitable mates and then succeeded in negotiating a *mahr* ("dower") and *jihaaz* ("dowry") acceptable to both parties (Eickelman 1998; Singerman 1995).[21] Individuals in the Middle East may thus be substantially less inclined than those in the West to locate the cause of a particular marital union in impersonal factors such as "chemistry" or "fate" (Khan 1998). Lastly, the person tends to dominate the political landscape of the Middle East (Khuri 1990). In the form of posters, statues and the names of places and institutions heads of state past and present heavily populate the physical environment of the region (Clark 2010; Makiya 2004). Political regimes in the Middle East tend to be either monarchical or autocratic, engendering an attendant focus on the ruler (Gelvin 2008). Even in regimes heavily grounded in an ideology, e.g. the Ba'athist movement in Syria and Arab nationalism in Egypt, the state tends to be identified, both in practice

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[21] In instances in which individuals establish romantic relationships in a more or less spontaneous fashion, marriage generally requires family members to sanction the match: the *kafa`a* ("compatibility") of potential spouses with respect to social status is often a central concern for the entire family unit (Bates and Rassam 2002).

and in the popular imagination, with particular individuals, e.g. the Assads in Syria and Nasser in Egypt (Rogan 2009).

Summary. Many Middle Eastern meaning systems (e.g. folk religious beliefs), cultural products (e.g. textbooks containing conspiracy theories), and practices (e.g. *wasta*) foster the tendency to locate the cause of a wide variety of events/states in personal agents. This is not to suggest that causal accounts generated by Middle Easterners in substantive public policy contexts adduce supernatural beings or hidden plots; they do not.[22] It seems likely, however, that as individuals are exposed to and engage with the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system the way of explaining the world which it affords generalizes to reasoning about political and military episodes.

Three Studies on Causal Reasoning in the Middle East and North America

Reasonable, well-informed observers can arrive at quite varied—but equally plausible—explanations of complex political and military events. To account for the French Revolution, for example, some scholars have adduced the personal failings of Louis XVI (e.g. Burke 2003) and others have adduced population dynamics (e.g. Goldstone 1993). The foregoing analysis of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system suggests that individuals in that setting are more likely than individuals in other cultural contexts, e.g. North America, to highlight the causal role of specific

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[22] The supernatural does appear in certain genres of jihadist literature, e.g. narratives of the miraculous destruction of US and Soviet airplanes attacking *mujahideen* in Afghanistan (Aaron 2008). Muslim apocalyptic literature, much of it authored and published in Egypt, interprets contemporary political events in religious, eschatological terms, e.g. as harbingers of the coming of the *dajjal* ("false messiah," "anti-Christ") and the end of the world (Cook 2008). Belief in a secret alliance between Jews and Communists, or that Communism was a vehicle for Jewish domination of the world, is reported to have been a major determinant of Saudi foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s (Lacey 1981).

individuals and groups. As they produce explanations of political and military episodes, in other words, Middle Easterners may tend to answer the question "why did event A happen" with "because of actor X." Correspondingly, individuals in Middle Eastern settings are likely to evaluate causal accounts of complex political and military events which adduce specific personal actors more favorably than individuals in other cultural contexts. As they consume explanations of political and military episodes, in other words, Middle Easterners may tend to regard "because of person/group X" as particularly good answer to the question "why did event A happen." More formally, I hypothesize that:

> *Individuals in Middle Eastern contexts are more likely than individuals in North American contexts to generate and endorse personal causal attributions for complex political and military events.*

It seems important in exploring cultural variation in the explanation of political and military events, more so perhaps than in the study of other areas of social cognition, to examine causal reasoning in natural, practically important settings. There is a tendency among some influential scholars to deny the existence of cultural differences in the thought processes of political decision-makers, either because all share in an essentially Western "Davos culture" (e.g. Huntington 1993) or because rational thought takes the same form the world over (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita 2010). If such differences do exist, however, the consequences of a failure at a public policy level to make adequate allowance for the disparate understandings of the world held by North American and Middle Eastern decision-makers hardly need to be adumbrated. In Study 1, therefore, I examine how al-Qa`ida and US Government analysts explain the

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failure of jihadist insurgencies in Iraq and Syria and in Study 2 I compare Middle Eastern and North American newspaper accounts of the conflict between Hamas and Fatah. Individuals who influence and determine public policy in the Middle East and North America are not only producers, but also consumers of explanatory accounts of political and military events. And as consumers, they are not limited to the causal narratives produced in their own socio-cultural system. Members of the political elite in the Gulf monarchies frequently have, for example, received their formal education in the West (Gause 1994) and tend to be avid readers of the Western print media (Lacey 2009). Accordingly, Study 3 explores the question of whether individuals in the Middle East and North America differ in their assessments of causal accounts of political and military episodes which focus on persons and those which focus on impersonal or supra-individual factors. Across all three studies, I anticipated that Middle Easterners would exhibit greater personalism than North Americans.

Study 1

I designed Study 1 to test the claim that individuals in Middle Eastern public-policy settings are more likely to attribute complex political and military events to persons than are those in North America. The study consists of a content-analysis of "lessons learned reports" concerning the failure of jihadist insurgencies in Iraq and Syria produced by Middle Eastern insurgents and North American counter-insurgents. Contemporary military organizations, in this case al-Qa`ida and the US Combating Terrorism Center, generate "lessons learned reports" which seek to identify the causes of the success or failure of their operations (US Army Center for Lessons Learned 2010). Given their purpose and content, this genre of writing offers a fruitful domain

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for the exploration of cultural differences in causal reasoning. A quantitative analysis of the proportion of personal causal attributions in these texts coupled with a qualitative analysis of their answers to the overarching question of "why did the insurgency fail" should yield substantive insights into how Middle Easterners and North Americans think about complex political and military episodes. I predicted that the proportion of personal causal attributions would be greater in the Middle Eastern texts than in the North American texts. I further anticipated that in their answer to the overarching question "why did the insurgency fail" Middle Eastern authors would tend to adduce particular actors whereas North American authors would tend to adduce impersonal, systemic or supra-individual factors.

Methods

Materials. I analyzed the content of four "lessons learned" documents, two generated by individuals in a Middle Eastern cultural context and two generated by individuals in a North American cultural context. One document from each socio-cultural system explains the failure of the jihadist insurgency in Iraq and one document from each socio-cultural system explains the failure of the jihadist insurgency in Syria.[23] "Analysis of the condition of the Islamic State of Iraq"

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[23] *Jihadist insurgency in Iraq* (2003-present): at its zenith in 2006 the jihadist insurgency in Iraq had gained effective control of many Sunni-majority areas and was a key player in the Iraqi political sphere; by 2009 jihadists, though still capable of carrying out "spectacular" attacks, no longer controlled any territory and had only a marginal direct impact on the political sphere. *Jihadist insurgency in Syria* (1976-1982): jihadists in Syria sought to overthrow the Ba`athist regime, both because of its secular orientation and because power was concentrated in the hands of Alawites (a heterodox Sh`ite sect); several years of guerilla conflict and terrorist attacks culminated in a decisive battle between government forces and jihadists at Hamah; the jihadist movement was crushed and most of its members killed or imprisoned.

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(subsequently referred to as "ME-Iraq") is a 34-page text (31 pages in translation) written in Arabic circa 2007.[24] No biographical information about the author, a mid-level member of al-Qa`ida, is available, but he appears from the prose style and diction of the text to be a moderately well-educated Middle Easterner; the substance of the text strongly suggests that he is not a native Iraqi.[25] "Lessons learned from the armed jihad ordeal in Syria" (subsequently referred to as "ME-Syria") is a 46-page text (45 in translation) written in Arabic circa 1990.[26] Its author, at one time a high-ranking member of al-Qa`ida, is a Syrian national with a degree in mechanical engineering (Lia 2006). "Dysfunction and decline: lessons learned from inside al-Qa`ida in Iraq" (subsequently referred to as "NA-Iraq") is a 25-page text written in English in 2009. Its author, then an analyst at the US Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, is a North American with an MA in international studies. "Syrian case study: back to the future" (subsequently referred to as "NA-Syria") is a 14-page text written in English in 2006; it appears as a chapter within a monograph entitled *Harmony and disharmony: exploiting al-Qa`ida's organizational vulnerabilities*. Its principal author, then an analyst at the US Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, is a North American with a PhD in political science.

   Translation. Both the original Arabic texts and English translations of ME-Iraq and ME-Syria are available through the Harmony database of the US Combating

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[24] Document NMEC-2007-6124449, Harmony database, Combating Terrorism Center, US Military Academy.

[25] Based on the assessment of two native-Arabic speakers conversant with this sort of material.

[26] Document AFGP-2002-600080, Harmony database, Combating Terrorism Center, US Military Academy.

Terrorism Center at West Point. Two native-Arabic speakers fluent in English and conversant with the objective and methodology of this study evaluated the English translations and found them to be accurate and faithful to the Arabic originals. The study therefore made use of the English-language versions of ME-Iraq and ME-Syria.

Coders. The author and a Middle Eastern research assistant blind to the hypothesis coded all four texts. I resolved instances of disagreement by adopting the assessment of the "blind" coder.

Identification of causal statements. The first step in the quantitative content analysis was the identification of all of the causal statements contained in these texts. The grammatical clause served as the coding unit. Lexical and semantic criteria determined whether or not these units were causal statements. Lexical determinants were the presence of a causal conjunction, e.g. "because," and a syntactical structure of: *referent* (i.e. the event or state to be explained) + *causal conjunction* + *explanatory statement* (Schoeneman and Rubanowitz 1985). For example, lexical criteria suggested that the following sentence from ME-Iraq be coded as a causal statement: "Muslims arose from all over the world [*referent*] due to [*causal conjunction*] their knowledge of their jihadist obligations [*explanatory statement*]." If a coding unit clearly functioned within the text to explain some event or state, I classified it as a causal statement on semantic grounds—even in the absence of a lexical marker such as a causal conjunction. For example, semantic criteria suggested that this sentence from ME-Syria, "The responsibility falls squarely on a handful of leaders" be coded as a causal statement since it served within the text to explain why the jihadist revolt did not succeed. Some causal statements identified through this set

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of lexical and semantic criteria concerned the focal event considered by these texts, i.e. the failure of the Iraqi/Syrian insurgency; others concerned subsidiary and/or ancillary phenomena, e.g. the ineffectiveness of suicide bombers in Iraq and in-fighting among the leaders of Syrian Islamist groups.

Coding of causal attributions. Each causal statement was coded as either a *personal causal attribution* or an *impersonal causal attribution*. A personal attribution explicitly locates the cause of an event/state in a particular individual or group. It must identify the particular person/group of persons generative of the event/state in question and it may—but need not—further specify the action, attribute or thoughts and feelings of the personal actor which produced the outcome. **Table 2** offers representative personal attributions. An impersonal attribution explicitly locates the cause of an event/state in something other than a particular individual or group and/or that actor's actions, attributes or thoughts and feelings. A wide variety of causal statements, for example those which adduce material or technological factors or the structure and dynamics of organizations, fall under this rubric. Causal statements which adduced events and supra-individual/social phenomena involving particular social actors, e.g. the US invasion of Iraq or conflict between tribal leaders and jihadists, were coded as impersonal if the event or supra-individual phenomena, rather than the social actor, was the grammatical subject of the coding unit.[27] I coded as

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[27] For example, the authors of ME-Iraq and NA-Iraq both ascribe the failure of the insurgency to social conflict between Iraqi and non-Iraqi jihadists. However, the causal statement "The ansari [Iraqi jihadists] are not welcoming the muhajirun [non-Iraqi jihadists]" was coded as a personal attribution since a particular personal actor ("the *ansari*") is the grammatical subject. The causal statement "Tension between foreign fighters and Iraqi members of AQI [caused the failure of the insurgency]" was

impersonal attributions those causal statements which described personal actors in universalizing or nomothetic statements, e.g. "terrorist organizations." **Table 2** offers representative impersonal attributions.

Results

Coder reliability. Assessed through Cohen's kappa inter-rater reliability was high ($\kappa = .85$). I also calculated the percentage of the causal statements on which the coders agreed. The percentage of agreement was high for both Middle Eastern texts (overall: 92.8%; ME-Iraq: 90.9%; ME-Syria: 94.8%) and North American texts (overall: 91.3%; NA-Iraq: 91.0%; NA-Syria: 91.5%).

Cultural differences in causal attribution. As anticipated, the proportion of causal statements coded as personal causal attributions was greater in the set of Middle Eastern texts than in the set of North American texts (**Figure 2**). Across both Middle Eastern documents, 63.2% of causal attributions were personal, compared to 36.6% across both North American documents, $z = 7.27$, $p < .001$. There was a significant association between the culture in which the texts were produced and the type of causal attribution, $\chi^2 (1, N=801) = 52.9$, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .26$. A comparison of ME-Iraq and NA-Iraq, i.e. of Middle Eastern and North American explanatory accounts of the same event, reveals the identical pattern: 65.5% of causal statements in ME-Iraq and 46.6% in NA-Iraq were coded as personal attributions, $z = 3.73$, $p < .001$ (**Figure 3**). The association between culture and type of causal attribution was significant in these analyses of the insurgency in Iraq, $\chi^2 (1, N=410) = 13.9$, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .18$. Similarly,

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coded as an impersonal attribution since the supra-individual phenomenon itself ("tension") is the grammatical subject of the coding unit.

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the proportion of personal attributions in the Middle Eastern account of the Syrian insurgency (ME-Syria) was greater than in the North American account of this same episode (NA-Syria), 60.7% vs. 26.4%, z = 6.56, p < .001 (**Figure 4**). Again, the association between culture and type of causal attribution was significant, χ^2 (1, N= 391) = 42.9, p < .001, φ = .33.

Cultural differences in causal reasoning are equally evident in a qualitative analysis of the form and content of these texts: the contents of ME-Iraq and ME-Syria are organized by actor and these documents ascribe the failure of insurgencies to specific individuals and groups; the contents of NA-Iraq and NA-Syria are organized by theme and these documents ascribe the failure of insurgencies to systemic factors. Consistent with the tendency to make personal causal attributions, the Middle Eastern documents are structured in terms of particular actors. ME-Iraq consists of discrete sections on the various groups of people who comprise the jihadist movement in Iraq, e.g. non-Iraqi jihadists, Iraqi jihadists and military commanders (**Table 3**). Particular sets of actors also serve to organize ME-Syria (**Table 4**). The first half of that document offers separate treatments of each jihadist group active in the insurgency; although the second chapter has a thematic structure with sections on "military operations" "propaganda operations" and so forth, these units frequently devolve into separate discussions of each organization. Particular actors do not, on the other hand, provide a framework for the North American texts. NA-Iraq is organized by theme, with sections on the conflict between al-Qa`ida and the broader Sunni community and on insurgent institutional structures and practices (**Table 3**). NA-Syria consists of a

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narrative of the jihadist insurgency in Syria and sections on agency problems and strategy (**Table 4**).

Moreover, the Middle Eastern and North American texts differ in the predicted fashion in the answers they provide to the question of why the insurgencies in Iraq and Syria failed. ME-Iraq locates the cause of the collapse of the jihad in disaffected and culturally-alien foreign fighters, impious and self-serving Iraqi jihadists, incompetent commanders and junior officers, and traitorous civilians. Consistent with the tendency to regard the person as the locus of causality, the principal solution to the insurgents' woes offered by the author of ME-Iraq is that of more rigorous and highly elaborated religious instruction.[28] NA-Iraq, on the other hand, attributes the failure of the jihadist insurgency to the dynamics of the relationship between al-Qa`ida and the Sunni community.  As Sunni tribal leaders became increasingly disappointed with and threatened by al-Qa`ida they withdrew their support and then actively opposed the jihadists; Sunni opposition, in turn, exacerbated structural and material deficiencies within al-Qa`ida; al-Qa'ida's organizational problems led to actions which further alienated the Sunnis, and so on.  Whereas the recommendations found in ME-Iraq focus on the person, specifically his religiosity, the recommendations found in NA-Iraq focus on organizational factors (e.g. striking al-Qa`ida training centers), supra-individual phenomena (e.g. encouraging competition between insurgent groups), and

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[28] To the extent that the author of ME-Iraq does offer recommendations concerning the organizational, material and operational aspects of the insurgency, these tend to be limited in number and detail, as well as remarkably pedestrian, e.g. "use rewards and incentives in assassinating the heads of the apostates [Shi`ite leaders]."

material factors (e.g. denial of safe havens and leveraging the US's superior resources).

In similar fashion, ME-Syria ascribes the failure of the jihadist revolt primarily to the inept, and often ideologically and morally suspect, leaders of the Islamist groups.[29] They preached jihad, but did little to prepare for it, accepted the help of apostate Muslims, and devoted their energies to petty intra-mural squabbles and fund-raising. NA-Syria, however, attributes the defeat of the insurgency to "the agency problem" intrinsic to terrorist groups: strategic and tactical effectiveness requires the leadership of such organizations to exercise considerable control over lower echelon personnel (e.g. so as to avoid actions which alienate supporters), but security requires the leadership to be insulated from these same elements. According to this account, jihadist groups in Syria were not configured in such a way so as to overcome this dilemma, and this in turn compromised the military effectiveness and internal stability of these organizations.

Discussion

Content-analysis revealed that the Middle Eastern texts contained a substantially greater proportion of personal attributions than did the North American texts. Further, in their answers to the question of why the insurgencies in Iraq and Syria failed the Middle Eastern texts tended to adduce particular individuals and groups, whereas the North American texts tended to adduce impersonal and systemic factors. The results of this study are thus consistent with the hypothesis that individuals in Middle Eastern

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[29] Unlike the author of ME-Iraq, however, the author of ME-Syria offers a number of fairly detailed recommendations concerning the structure and operations/tactics of jihadist groups.

contexts are more likely than those in North American settings to generate personal causal attributions for complex political and military events. But, at least three areas of difference between the Middle Eastern and North American authors apart from that of national/regional culture lend themselves to alternative explanations for the observed variation in causal reasoning. First, the authors of ME-Iraq and ME-Syria participated in the events they sought to explain in a more direct fashion than did the authors of NA-Iraq and NA-Syria. The formers' participatory perspective and/or their more intimate knowledge of the actors involved in these episodes might engender personalism. Second, the North American authors, unlike their Middle Eastern counterparts, had relatively extensive formal training in the social sciences; disciplinary norms may tend to discourage the explanation of complex political episodes in terms of particular individuals. Third, there may be some association between participation in the jihadist movement and personalistic reasoning: individuals with a dispositional inclination to attribute political and military events to specific actors may find Islamist ideologies particularly congenial (cf. Gambetta and Hertog 2009). In addition, one might question whether any study of professional insurgents and counter-insurgents, individuals clearly located in highly atypical environments, can yield much insight into the psychology of Middle Easterners and North Americans in more mainstream contexts. Of course, the findings presented here are of some practical import regardless of their generalizability or causal antecedents: the ways in which jihadists reason about the world are likely to have substantive consequences for the actions they undertake. Nevertheless, it seemed necessary to replicate this study with texts generated in a less rarefied public policy context by

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individuals with more closely comparable educational backgrounds and the same degree of participation in the events which they seek to explain.

Study 2

Study 2, like Study 1, tests the claim that individuals in Middle Eastern public-policy settings are more likely to attribute complex political and military events to persons than are those in North America. The study consists of a content-analysis of Middle Eastern and North American newspaper articles on the conflict between the rival Palestinian political organizations Hamas and Fatah. The rationale for the exploration of modes of causal reasoning in this set of texts is twofold. First, the non-cultural factors which may have accounted for the Middle East-North American differences observed in Study 1 are not present here. These documents were generated by individuals closely comparable with respect to educational background and degree of participation in events, and journalists are arguably more representative of the socio-cultural mainstream than professional insurgents and counter-insurgents. Second, cultural variation in the explanatory accounts present in newspaper articles, if it exists, is of both theoretical and practical importance. Everyday cultural products such as newspapers are likely to be important vehicles for the transmission and reproduction of culture-specific ways of thinking (Kim and Markus 1999; Morris and Peng 1994). Newspapers serve, moreover, as a basic source for the understandings of political and military events held by mass and elite and thus provide critical inputs into policy-relevant decision-making processes (Pintak 2009). I anticipated that that the proportion of personal causal attributions would be greater in the Middle Eastern texts than in the North American texts.

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Methods

Materials. I analyzed the content of newspaper articles concerning the conflict between Hamas and Fatah generated in Middle Eastern and North American cultural contexts. The North American texts appeared in the *New York Times*, which has a daily print circulation of 930,000, is published in New York City, and is regarded as the "newspaper of record" in the US. Available biographical data indicates that all of the eight North American authors whose work was analyzed were professional journalists and none had advanced training in the social sciences.[30] None were active participants in the events on which they reported. Half of the Middle Eastern texts appeared in the English-language edition of *al-Ahram* ("the Pyramids") and half appeared in the English-language edition of *Asharq al-Awsat* ("the Middle East"). *Al-Ahram* has a daily print circulation of 900,000 and is published in Cairo (Rugh 2004). [31] It is widely considered to be the most influential newspaper in the Arab world (Hammond 2007). *Asharq al-Awsat* is a well-regarded pan-Arab newspaper based in London with a daily print circulation of 250,000 (Rugh 2004). The editorial content of both *al-Ahram* and *Asharq al-Awsat* caters to the Middle Eastern political and cultural mainstream (Hammond 2007). Available biographical data indicates that all of the eleven Middle Eastern authors whose work was analyzed were professional journalists and none had advanced training in the social sciences.[32] Two of the writers

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[30] One held a BA in political philosophy, one held a BA in Russian studies and one held an MA in "communications.

[31] The English-language edition of *al-Ahram* appears once a week and is entitled *al-Ahram Weekly*.

[32] All held BAs, primarily in journalism, some from North American universities; one held an advanced degree in journalism.

were affiliated with Fatah, but none appears to have actively participated in the events on which they reported. The volume of reportage on the Fatah-Hamas conflict contained in these three newspapers rendered a content-analysis of all relevant articles impractical. I therefore selected at random 30 articles from the *New York Times*, 15 articles from *al-Ahram* and 15 articles from *Asharq al-Awsat*, all published between June 2007-June 2009. Overall, the North American and Middle Eastern texts were virtually identical in length, containing 28.6 and 28.7 thousand words respectively.

Coders. The author and a Middle Eastern research assistant blind to the hypothesis coded all of the articles. I resolved instances of disagreement by adopting the assessment of the "blind" coder.

Identification and coding of causal attributions. Procedures for the identification of causal statements and the classification of causal attributions were identical to those used in Study 1 and described above.

Results

Coder reliability. Assessed through Cohen's kappa inter-rater reliability was high ($\kappa = .84$). I also calculated the percentage of the causal statements on which the coders agreed. The percentage of agreement was high for both the Middle Eastern texts (overall: 93.0%; *al-Ahram*: 93.2%; *Asharq al-Awsat*: 92.7%) and North American texts (92.1%).

Cultural differences in causal attribution. As predicted, the proportion of causal statements coded as personal causal attributions was greater in the set of Middle Eastern texts than in the set of North American texts (**Figure 5**). Across both Middle Eastern newspapers, 72.2% of causal attributions were personal, compared to 55.0% in

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the North American newspaper, $z = 3.08$, $p < .005$. There was a significant association between the culture in which the texts were produced and the type of causal attribution χ^2 (1, N=298) = 9.5, $p < .005$, $\varphi = .18$. This pattern of Middle Eastern-North American difference held for each Middle Eastern newspaper considered separately. The proportion of personal attributions in *al-Ahram* was substantially greater than in the *New York Times*, 69.9% vs. 55.0%, $z = 2.36$, $p < .05$, and there was a significant association between culture and attribution, χ^2 (1, N=243) = 5.6, $p < .05$, $\varphi = .158$. Similarly, the percentage of personal attributions in *Asharq al-Awsat* was 76.4% (vs. 55.0% in the *New York Times*), $z = 2.75$, $p < .01$, and the association between culture and causal attribution was again significant, χ^2 (1, N=195) = 7.6, $p < .01$, $\varphi = .20$.

Qualitative analysis indicates that the key difference between the Middle Eastern and North American texts was the absence in the former and the presence in the latter of efforts to explain the Fatah-Hamas conflict in terms of impersonal and systemic factors. Articles in the North American newspaper attributed to the civil strife to social phenomena (e.g. differences in the centrality of the mosque to communal life in the West Bank and Gaza), historical events (e.g. pre-1967 Egyptian control of Gaza and pre-1967 Jordanian control of the West Bank) and economic conditions (e.g. the relatively more robust economy of the West Bank). This material was not, it should be noted, merely the sort of background information on the West Bank and Gaza which a North American newspaper might be required to provide its readers, but which would be superfluous for readers in a Middle Eastern setting. Apart from this area of difference these texts were broadly similar in form and content. Both sets of texts regularly assigned a causal role to particular political figures, e.g. Mahmoud

Abbas.[33]   Importantly, the same individuals tend to appear in Middle Eastern and North American explanatory accounts of this sort, suggesting that the greater frequency of personal attributions in the Middle Eastern texts was not a function of their authors' greater familiarity with/knowledge of Palestinian politicos. Both sets of texts regularly ascribed the Fatah-Hamas conflict as a whole and various episodes within that conflict to the motives of specific individual and collective actors, chiefly to gain and maintain political power or to exact revenge on political adversaries. And both adduced with roughly the same frequency the Palestinian states' relationships with their neighbors and the institutions and norms of the governments in the West Bank and Gaza.

Discussion

Content-analysis revealed that Middle Eastern newspaper articles on the Fatah-Hamas conflict contained a substantially greater proportion of personal attributions than did their North American counterparts. Attempts to explain political and military episodes in terms of impersonal, systemic and supra-individual forces were almost entirely lacking in the Middle Eastern texts. These results are unlikely to have been produced by factors other than that of socio-cultural location.   There were no substantive differences between the Middle Eastern and North American authors in either their educational backgrounds or degree of participation in the events of the conflict.[34] And since the analyzed texts appeared in the most highly-regarded, largest-

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[33] Chairman of Fatah and president of the Palestinian National Authority.
[34] *Al-Ahram* and *Asharq al-Awsat*—which like all Middle Eastern media outlets are subject to a certain degree of state control—exhibit a subtle, but discernible, editorial bias against Hamas which is absent in the North American texts. I can, however,

circulation newspapers in their respective socio-cultural systems, they might plausibly be regarded as offering insight into causal reasoning in mainstream contexts.

The explanatory narratives found in newspapers are of interest not only because they provide individuals with understandings of what and how to think about the causes of political and military events, but also because they tend to flow across the boundaries of socio-cultural systems. Elites in Middle Eastern contexts routinely read the *New York Times* (Lacey 2009) and North Americans can easily access the English-language editions of *Asharq al-Awsat* and *al-Ahram*. This begs the question of how individuals respond to modes of causal attribution which their own socio-cultural systems tend not to promote. Are, for example, Middle Eastern readers likely to gloss over explanations of political and military events which focus on impersonal factors and North American readers likely to regard personalistic accounts of complex episodes as too thin? I explore this topic in Study 3.

Study 3

Studies 1 and 2 considered cultural differences in the production of explanatory accounts of complex political and military events; Study 3 considers cultural differences in their consumption. It tests the claim that individuals in Middle Eastern cultural contexts tend to differ from individuals in North American settings in their evaluations of the explanatory power of personal and impersonal causal attributions. To that end, participants in this study read brief narratives of recent world events and rated the extent to which personal and impersonal factors explained these episodes (cf.

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identify no effects of this bias on causal reasoning, i.e. there are no Fatah-Hamas differences within the Middle Eastern texts in the proportion of personal/impersonal attributions.

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Morris and Peng 1993). Consistent with the goal of exploring cultural differences in consequential real-world settings, study participants were students at a top-tier university in North America: individuals occupying key political and military decision-making roles in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system have often received undergraduate and/or graduate training at North American universities. I anticipated that Middle Eastern participants would assign higher ratings to personal attributions than to impersonal attributions and North Americans would exhibit the opposite pattern, assigning higher ratings to impersonal than to personal attributions.

Methods

Participants. Participants were 20 Middle Eastern nationals (12 female; mean age 25.3 years) and 20 North Americans (11 female; mean age 21.2 years) attending a private university in California. Middle Eastern participants responded to an email sent to members of a campus religious organization. North American participants responded to an email sent to students who had expressed a willingness to take part in social science research. All participants received a $5 gift certificate for completing the survey.

Materials and procedure. Participants completed a questionnaire consisting of brief narratives of four recent world events, each followed by four one-sentence explanations of why the event in question occurred. Two of the narratives concerned the ratification of international treaties and two of the narratives concerned violent civil conflict. None of the events took place in North America or the Middle East and none received extensive coverage in the North American or Middle Eastern media. Narratives were approximately 150 words in length and contained only chronological

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and descriptive statements, e.g. "800 people were wounded in clashes between anti-government protesters known as the 'red shirts' and security forces." They did not contain any explicit causal statements. At the conclusion of the narratives participants read two personal and two impersonal attributions for the event, e.g. "Leaders lacked an adequate understanding of international financial markets" (personal attribution) and "Recent shifts in the global strategic and economic environment prompted the ratification of the agreement" (impersonal attribution). For each statement participants responded to the question "To what extent was this a cause of this event" using a seven-point verbal rating scale ranging from 1 "not a cause at all" to 7 "the most important cause."[35] Reliability for this measure was adequate: Cronbach's alphas were .72 and .62 for Middle Eastern and North American participants respectively. The questionnaire was administered online in English using Qualtrics software.

Results

Since personalism is, by definition, the tendency to locate the cause of events in persons rather than in impersonal factors, the difference between participants' ratings of personal and impersonal causal attributions served as the dependent measure. Scores greater than 0 indicated that more explanatory power was assigned to personal than to impersonal attributions; scores less than 0 indicated that more explanatory power was assigned to impersonal than personal attributions; and higher scores on the index indicated greater personalism. Middle Eastern participants exhibited greater personalism than did North American participants (M= -.36, SD = .86 vs. M = -1.4,

[35] Responses between these two anchors were "a minor cause," "one of many causes," "a major cause," "a very important cause," and "an extremely important cause."

SD = 1.4). A 2 (culture: Middle Eastern vs. North American) x 2 (gender: male vs.

female) ANOVA with age as covariate revealed a significant main effect of culture,

$F(1, 36) = 8.25$, $p < .05$, $d = .91$ (**Figure 6**).[36] No other effects were significant. The

scores of Middle Eastern participants did not differ from 0, $t(19) = .08$, *ns*, i.e. Middle

Easterners tended to rate personal and impersonal attributions as having equal

explanatory power.   On average they assessed both personal and impersonal

attributions to be "one of many causes" (personal: M = 3.3, SD = .74; personal: M =

3.6, SD = .74). The scores of North Americans were significantly less than 0, $t(19) = -$

4.5, $p < .001$, i.e. North Americans tended to ascribe greater explanatory power to

impersonal than to personal attributions. On average they assessed personal

attributions to be "one of many causes" (M = 3.1, SD = .72), but assessed impersonal

attributions to be "a major cause" (M = 4.5, SD = 1.1).

Discussion

    As predicted, Middle Eastern and North American study participants evaluated

causal accounts of complex political and military events differently. Although North

Americans conformed to the anticipated pattern of higher ratings for impersonal than

personal attributions, Middle Easterners failed to rate assign greater explanatory power

to personal than to impersonal attributions. A number of factors may have produced

this latter, somewhat surprising, finding. Chronic exposure to and engagement with

the North American socio-cultural system may have shifted the causal reasoning of the

Middle Eastern participants away from personalism.   All had resided in North

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[36] The incorporation of gender as a factor in the analysis seemed warranted given the
Western belief—valid or not—in the existence of a relatively pronounced male-female
divide in Middle Eastern cultural contexts.

America for over one year, and studies in other domains of psychological functioning have demonstrated that students studying abroad tend to acquire the mental habits of the culture in which they are located (Markus and Kitayama 2004). Middle Eastern participants in this study may also have lacked sufficient familiarity with the actors involved in these relatively obscure events to fully endorse personal attributions. Rosen (1984) notes that for Moroccans the construction of personalistic explanatory accounts requires considerable knowledge of the individual to whom causality is ascribed—"who a man is, who he knows, who he deals with" (50). Moreover, the absence of higher ratings for personal than for impersonal attributions among Middle Eastern participants should not obscure the practical significance of the overall finding of Middle Eastern-North American differences in the evaluation of explanations of real-world political and military events.

Causal Reasoning and the Middle Eastern Political Landscape

<u>Personalism and support for political ideologies</u>

A basic tenet of the socio-cultural approach is that the relationship between society and the psyche is bi-directional (Fiske et al. 1998; Markus and Hamedani 2007). Psychological processes determine, at least in part, the contours of socio-cultural systems. In the concluding section of this paper I suggest that the research presented here offers new and potentially important insights into the Middle Eastern political landscape.

Fuller (2003) observes of the secular democracy movement in the Middle East that "it cannot rally a crowd…in any capital city and it remains primarily the preserve of a small Westernized elite" (15). Despite the considerable resources at its disposal and

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relatively high levels of mass dissatisfaction with extant regimes, the secular democracy or "Arab reform" movement has been remarkably unsuccessful in gaining widespread support (Roy 2007; Diamond 2010; Arab Barometer 2006).[37] This stands in marked contrast to the popular reception of Arab nationalism and Islamism.[38] All three movements promise good governance, social justice, economic development, and freedom from Western hegemony. But Arab nationalism and Islamism have long been central, sometimes dominant, features of the Middle Eastern political landscape and have succeeded in gaining mass followings among all strata of society—often in

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[37] Note that popular support for the secular democracy/Arab reform movement is analytically and practically distinct from the desire for representative or participatory government. Secular democratic/Arab reform groups tend to have relatively small and socio-economically homogeneous memberships, and their ability to generate collective action, e.g. successful election campaigns and protests, is lackluster (UNDP 2005). Yet, opinion polls indicate that a majority of Middle Easterners favor some form of democracy and election turn-out in the Middle East tends to be high (Tessler 2002; Arab Barometer 2006; Roy 2007). A variety of political actors in the region apart from—and generally opposed to—the Arab reform movement have lobbied for limited forms of democracy. Some Islamists, e.g Qaradawi (2009), favor elections as a means of establishing an Islamist state or at least curbing the ability of secular authorities to repress Islamist groups; the *diwanniya* movement in Kuwait and reform groups in Saudi Arabia support monarchical regimes while pushing for elected consultative assemblies (Gause 1994).

[38] Arab nationalism/pan-Arabism in its ideal-typical form seeks to unite the states of the Middle East into a single nation. The movement reached its zenith in the 1960s with the short-lived unification of Egypt and Syria as the United Arab Republic and the accession of the pan-Arabist Ba`ath ("Resurrection") Party in Syria and Iraq. As a political and ideological force, pan-Arabism has diminished considerably since 1967, but continues to be a staple of popular discourse, e.g. in calls for an "Arab renaissance" (UNDP 2005), and is still capable of generating a considerable mass response, e.g. the demonstrations of support for Saddam seen throughout the Middle East during the Gulf War (Rogan 2010). Islamism embraces a wide variety of movements which seek to organize and regulate state and society in accordance with the tenets of Islam (Euben & Zaman, 2009). These range from small extremist groups, e.g. al-Qa`ida, to successful political parties, e.g the Muslim Brotherhood, to apolitical *da`wa* (missionary) societies, e.g. Tablighi Jama`at, to state regimes, e.g. that of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Taliban (Fuller 2003).

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spite of concerted efforts by regimes to suppress such groups (Kepel 2002; Gelvin 2008; Rogan 2009). Why have Arab nationalism and Islamism been so much more successful in capturing the popular imagination in the Middle East than secular democracy?

Personalism is likely to be one, though certainly not the only, factor contributing to the limited appeal of secular democracy relative to Arab nationalism and Islamism. Sperber's (1996) epidemiological model of cultural transmission suggests that ideas spread through communities in much the same way as diseases. Just as only those pathogens which are well-adapted to their hosts can multiply within a population, so too belief systems must be consonant with the ways of thinking and feeling prevalent in a society if they are to gain widespread acceptance (Boyer 2001). One might anticipate, therefore, that political ideologies which locate the cause of and solution to social problems in particular individuals and groups would be more successful in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system than political ideologies which locate the cause of and solution to social problems in impersonal factors such as institutions and processes. Personalism does in fact appear to be, as the brief survey offered below suggests, far more characteristic of the central tenets of Islamism and Arab nationalism than those of the secular democracy/Arab reform movement (**Table 5**).

Islamism, Arab nationalism and secular democracy compared

Islamists attribute the social, economic and political problems confronting Middle Easterners to rulers who are in a state *jahiliyya*, i.e. ignorance concerning the sovereignty of Allah (Qutb 2007; Roy 2004). *Jahili* rulers create and implement laws and policies based on something other than "the true guidance provided by Allah"

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(Qutb 2007; al-Banna 2009). Because Allah is the sole "lord and sovereign of men" such rulers defy the created order and negative outcomes, e.g. social injustice and foreign domination, inevitably follow (Qutb 2007). State-supported clerics also bear responsibility since they provide the façade of religious legitimacy which allows apostates to rule (Mawdudi 2009). Islamist thought recognizes the importance of systems and institutions, but treats them as personal agents: "a living social formation with power and intention [that] crushes all elements which seem to be dangerous to its personality" (Qutb 1978: 11).

The subtext of this analysis and proof of its correctness is a sweeping historical narrative which focuses on the causal role of the person. Middle Easterners once worshipped idols and were as a consequence powerless, impoverished and subject to injustice; the first generation of Muslims submitted to Allah and created a powerful, prosperous and just society; their descendants "drifted away from the Qu`ran" (Qutb 2007: 1) and so forfeited the political, material and ethical gains of their predecessors; contemporary Middle Easterners have reverted to idol worship and are thus experiencing a return to the powerlessness, poverty and injustice characteristic of the pre-Islamic past (Fuller 2003). The person is not only the cause of the problems plaguing the Middle East but also the solution. Believers must take the place of individuals in the grip of jahiliyya and once again govern state and society (Mawdudi 2009). This cadre of enlightened rulers comes into being through personal transformation—"our aim is to first change ourselves so that we may later change society" (Qutb 2007: 14). Personal transformation is requisite because the success of the Islamist program will rest ultimately on "the capacity of our minds to reconstruct

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feelings, ideas and experiences like the feelings, ideas and experiences of the first generation of Muslims" (Qutb 2007: 15).

Arab nationalists attribute the social, economic and political problems confronting Middle Easterners to the Western powers who divide and exploit the Arab people and to those Arabs who are complicit in these acts. To further their imperial ambitions colonial Great Britain and France and the neo-colonial US denuded the Arabs of their strength by splitting them into myriad weak and arbitrarily circumscribed states (Mufti 1996). Some Arabs collude with the Western powers and work to further their own selfish interests and those of their patrons (Ayubi 1994). Others contribute to the negative state of affairs through their ignorance of or delusions concerning the importance of Arab solidarity (Kramer 1993). Arab nationalists, like Islamists, ground their analysis and demonstrate its correctness in a sweeping historical narrative which focuses on the causal role of the person (Kramer 1993). When they overcame the petty divisions of tribe, region and sect Arabs gave birth to Islam and conquered a vast empire; when the West divided the Arab people and it succumbed to "self-denial of its own reality and forgetfulness of its own identity" (Ayubi 1994: 166) Arabs were unable to defeat even the tiny state of Israel (Mufti 1996). The Arab nationalist solution to the problems confronting the Middle East centers on individuals rather than institutions. All Arabs must recognize that they "have one heart and one soul" and each person must "cherish his Arabness" (Hudson 1977: 39). Rulers must

acknowledge the organic unity of the Arab people and act to advance its interests rather than the parochial concerns of nation-states.[39]

Secular democrats attribute the problems confronting the Middle East to "deeply rooted shortcomings in the Arab institutional structure" (UNDP 2005: 3). The authoritarian "legal and political architecture" characteristic of regimes in the region is the principal and most intractable source of distress (UNDP 2005: 24). Repressive institutions and practices are in turn produced by "the convergence of political, social and economic structures" (UNDP: 31). Individuals and groups are significant chiefly in so far as they are occupants of roles within the dysfunctional political order; it is the "modern Arab state" itself which is problematic, not its specific personnel (Khouri 2010).

Unlike Arab nationalists and Islamists, who locate their social critique within the context of Arab/Muslim personal identity, secular democrats tend to ground their analysis in universals such as "modernization" and the quest for "freedom and human development" (Naggar 2001; UNDP 2002). The movement seeks to solve the region's problems through the alteration of "institutions and processes" (Roy 2007), e.g. legal and electoral reforms and the strengthening of civil society. Attendees at US-sponsored democratization workshops, for example, suggest that "the corporation is

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[39] One might note that just as Arab nationalism locates the cause of the Middle East's problems in particular actors, the movement itself largely rose and fell with the fortunes of an individual, the Egyptian president Nasser (Gelvin 2008). Nasser was a brilliant orator and his speeches, which dominated the Middle Eastern airwaves during the 1950s and 1960, produced a passionate devotion to the pan-Arabist cause among both mass and elite in the throughout the region, as did his more or less successful acts of defiance against the West during the same period (Rogan 2009). Likewise, Nasser's humiliating defeat at the hands of the Israeli's in the Six Day War led to mass disaffection with Arab nationalism (Rogan 2009).

the new power for democracy" in Jordan (Department of State 2009a) and advocate "concrete procedures to understand and improve constituent services" in Algeria (Department of State 2009b). Roy (2007) observes that the secular democracy movement's focus on systems and procedures tends to be coupled with a corresponding inattention to the person, manifest, for example, in their scant awareness of or concern for popular perceptions that they are agents or dupes of the West.

An exploratory analysis thus suggests that personalism is likely to play some role in the limited popular appeal of the secular democracy movement in the Middle East relative to that of Arab nationalism and Islamism. Secular democrats tend to offer explanations of and solutions to social problems which are not consonant with the mode of causal reasoning prevalent among individuals in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system. One might make two further observations in support of this claim. Communism—characterized by an emphasis on social structures and processes broadly similar to that of the secular democracy movement—has failed to secure popular support in the Middle East, both in absolute terms and relative to its success in other parts of the developing world (Gelvin 2008).[40] Conversely, personalistic accounts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are a ubiquitous feature of the Middle Eastern political landscape, resonating with equal force among Arab nationalists, Islamists and secular democrats (Fuller 2003; Roy 2007).

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[40] "Arab socialism" as a component of Arab nationalism did garner considerable popular support, but its discourse emphasized personal actors—the Arab masses, the exploitative West, and reactionary Arab elites—rather than structures and processes (Kramer 1993).

Conclusion

The research presented here explored cultural variation in personalism, i.e. the tendency to locate the cause(s) of event/states in particular individuals and groups. Three studies support the hypothesis that individuals in Middle Eastern contexts are more likely than those in North American contexts to generate and endorse personal causal attributions for complex political and military episodes. In Study 1 Middle Eastern insurgents were substantially more likely to ascribe the failure of military campaigns to specific social actors than were North American counter-insurgents. In Study 1 Middle Eastern insurgents adduced specific social actors to explain the failure of military campaigns far more frequently than did North American counter-insurgents. This pattern was replicated among more mainstream segments of the population in Study 2, which demonstrated that Middle Eastern newspaper articles concerning the Fatah-Hamas contained a substantially higher proportion of personal causal attributions than did North American newspaper articles. In Study 3 Middle Eastern nationals studying in at a North American university ascribed less explanatory power to impersonal explanations for a variety of recent political and military episodes than did their North American counterparts. The personalism exhibited by Middle Easterners in these studies is likely to been the outcome of engagement with some quite central elements of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system. *Qaraba*, core beliefs and values concerning the self and social relationships, directs attention to and constructs the person as a causal agent. Features of everyday life including various facets of religious belief, the popular media's reportage of conspiracy theories, and social practices such as *wasta* are likely to foster the mental habit of attributing

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events/states to someone rather than to something. In examining both a relatively unexplored culture area—the Middle East—and an under-studied aspect of causal reasoning—personalism—this research adds to our understanding of the ways in which socio-cultural systems shape psychological processes. It further suggests the possibility that culture-specific modes of psychological functioning play a non-trivial role in the political domain.
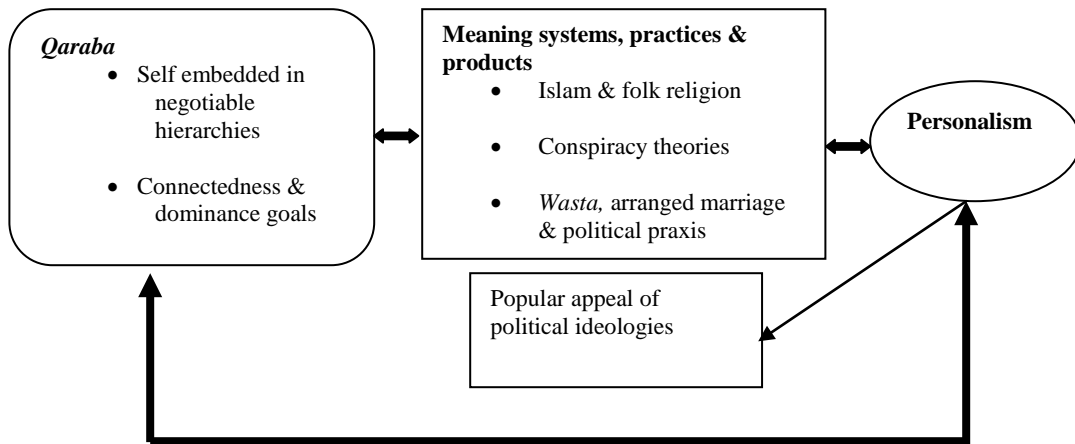
Figure 1. Pathways of mutual influence: the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system and personalism
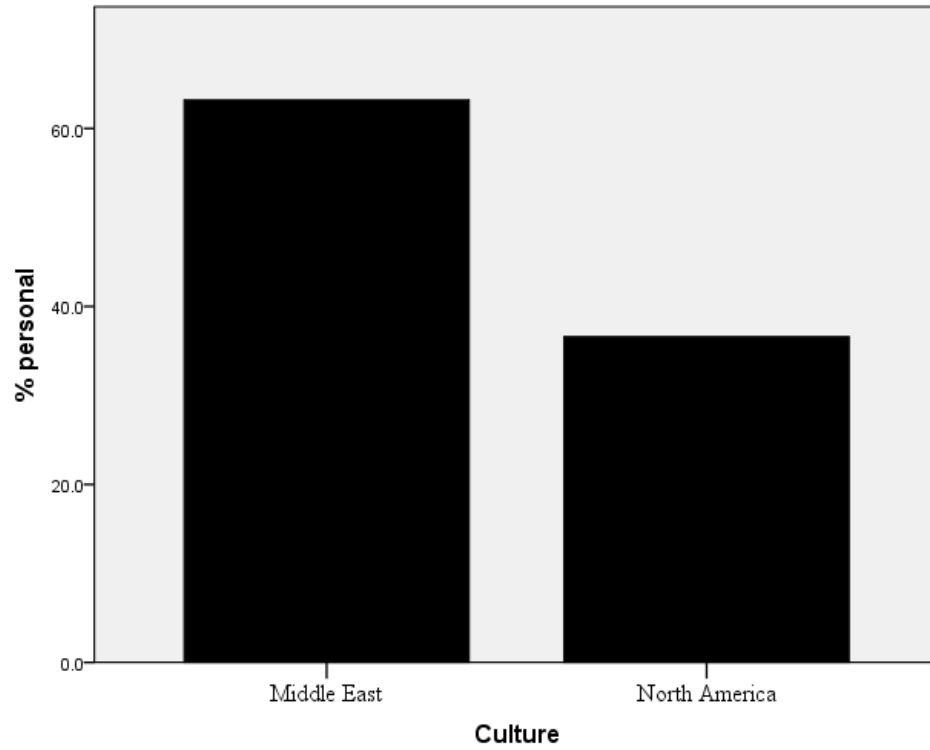
Figure 2. Study 1, percentage of personal attributions: Middle East vs. North America
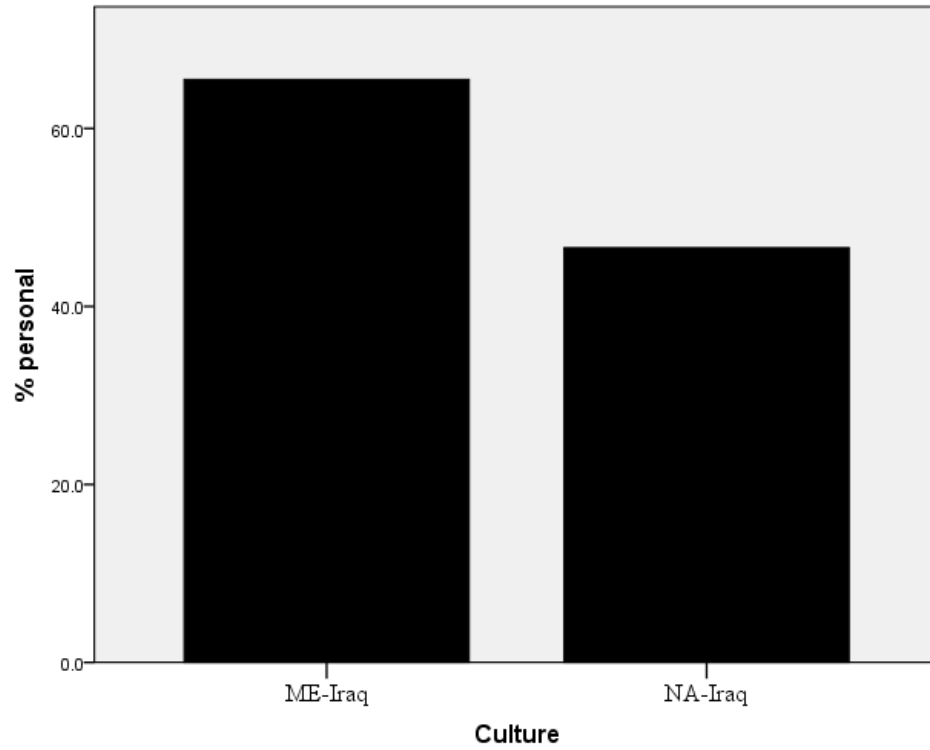
Figure 3. Study 1, percentage of personal attributions: ME-Iraq vs. NA-Iraq
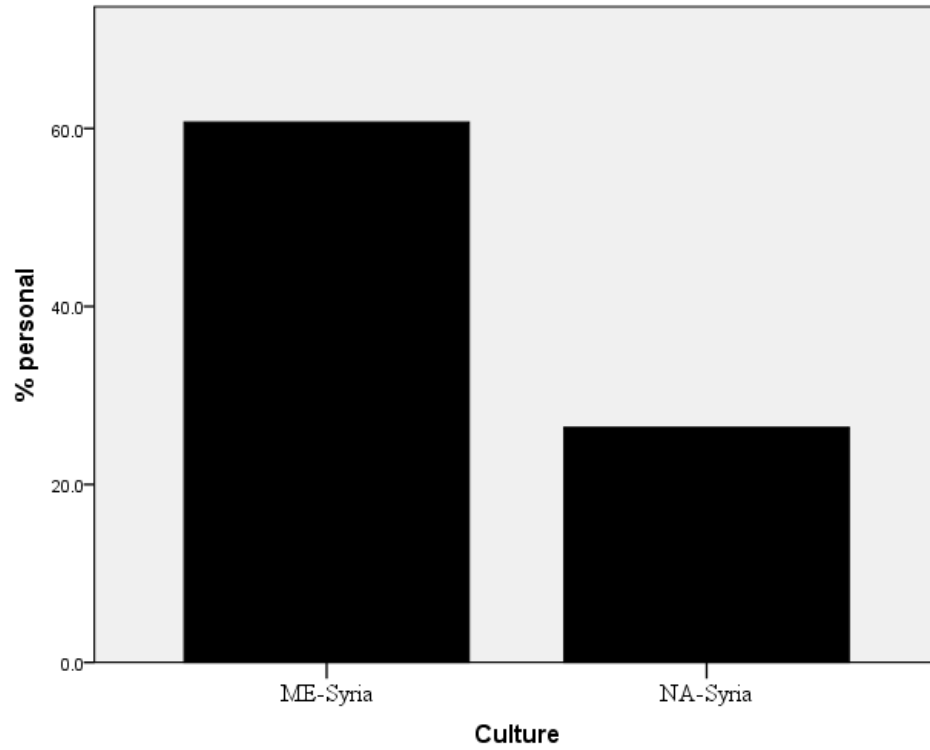
Figure 4. Study 1, percentage of personal attributions: ME-Syria vs. NA-Syria
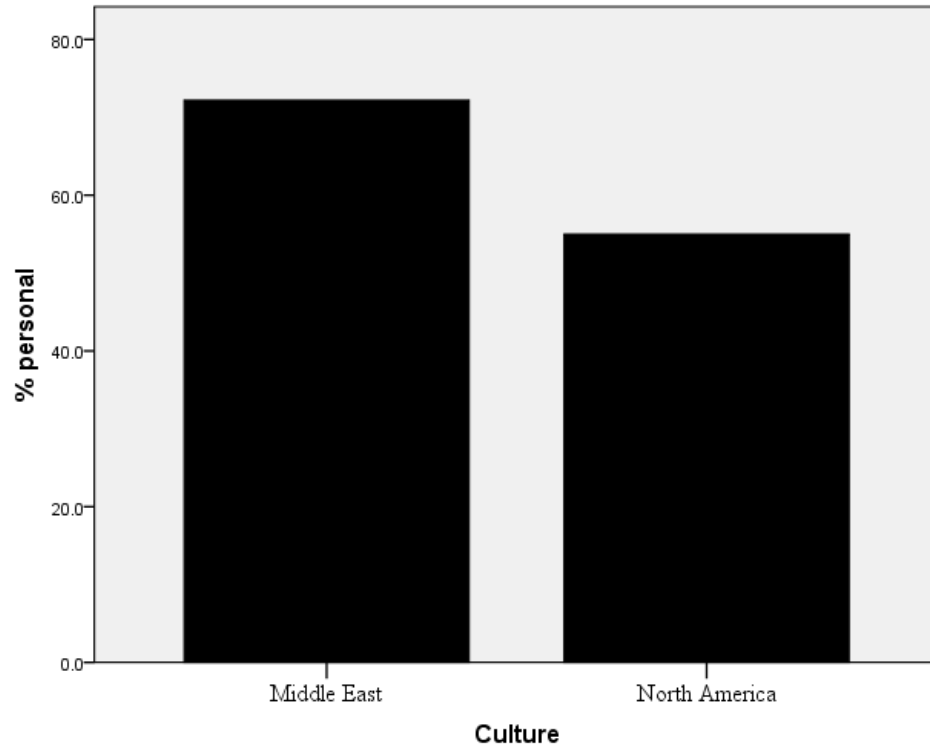
Figure 5. Study 2, percentage of personal attributions: Middle East vs. North America
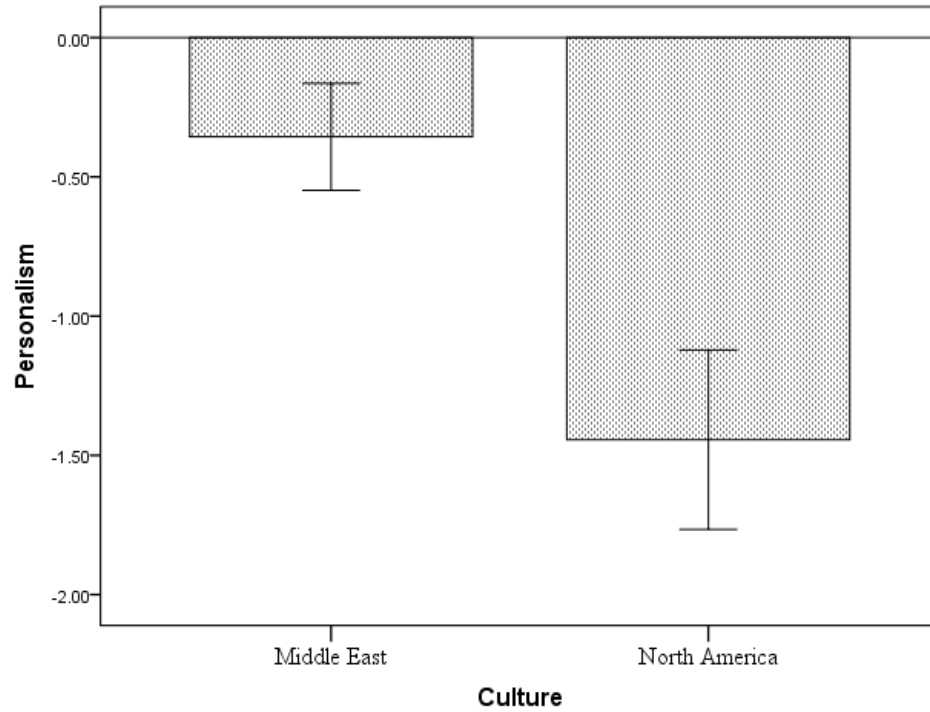
Figure 6. Study 3, difference between participants' ratings of personal and impersonal causal attributions by culture. Scale ranges from -7, the strongest possible preference for impersonal causal accounts to 7, the strongest possible preference for personal accounts.

	Core beliefs	**Core goals**
Self	• interdependent self-construal • self-in-relation-to-others	• connectedness • "People are for people"
Social relationships	• relationships are hierarchical • positions within hierarchies are negotiable/achieved	• dominance • "Be an *aliph*"[i]

[i] *Aliph* is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, thus "Be a leader, not a follower."

Table 1. *Qaraba*, core beliefs and values concerning the self and social relationships

Attribution type	Explanatory statement	Event explained	Document
personal/simple	"*Some leaders* contributed negatively to the course of events."	failure of insurgency	ME-Syria
personal/action	"*The mujahideen did not develop* an operational strategy."	failure of insurgency	ME-Syria
personal/attribute	"*Most of the mujahideen were not proficient* in the Iraqi dialect."	Iraqi vs. jihadist conflict	ME-Iraq
personal/mental	"*Many of the martyrs were shocked* by the actual nature of suicide operations."	ineffectiveness of suicide missions	ME-Iraq
impersonal/material	"*The postal system* did not offer commanders the ability to respond in real time…."	ineffective al-Qa`ida military operations	NA-Iraq
impersonal/structures	"Ineffective *military command structure*…."	failure of insurgency	NA-Syria
impersonal/systems	"*The plurality of propaganda* weakens al-Qa`ida's storytelling ability."	Iraqi vs. jihadist conflict	NA-Iraq
impersonal/relationships	"*Tension between* Iraqi and foreign members of al-Qa`ida…."	failure of insurgency	NA-Iraq
impersonal/nomothetic	"*Terrorist organizations* face fundamental tradeoffs between operational security…and tactical control."	failure of insurgency	NA-Syria

Table 2. Study 1, representative personal and impersonal causal attributions

ME-Iraq	NA-Iraq
• Muhajirun (non-Iraqi jihadists o Suicide bombers o Fighters o Recruiters • Ansar (Iraqi jihadists) • Emirs (military commanders o 1st & 2nd generation o 3rd generation • Junior officers • Finances • Recommendations o personal piety o organization & tactics	• Relationship between Sunnis & al-Qa`ida   o transition from cooperation to conflict   o mismatch between Sunni & al-Qa`ida goals • al-Qa`ida's organizational dysfunction   o structural deficits & conflict with Sunnis   o competition for jihadist "hearts and minds"   o command & control issues • Impact of Iraqi political environment on al-Qa`ida o al-Qa`ida in relation to other political actors   o Sunni-Shi`a relations & al-Qa`ida • Relationship between al-Qa`ida & global jihadist movement • Recommendations o critical components of al-Qa`ida infrastructure o strategic communications/public diplomacy

Table 3. Outlines of ME-Iraq & NA-Iraq

ME-Syria	NA-Syria

• Observations on the Syrian jihad
   o Chronology of events
   o Syrian insurgency "as a whole"
   o al-Talea ("the Vanguard")
   o Muslim Brotherhood
   o Military commanders
• Lessons learned
   o Military operations
      ▪ al-Talea
      ▪ Muslim Brotherhood
   o Political and diplomatic operations
      ▪ Muslim Brotherhood
      ▪ al-Talea
   o Internal structure & cohesion
      ▪ Muslim Brotherhood
      ▪ al-Talea
      ▪ leadership cadre
   o Morale, recruitment and training
	• Chronology of events
	• Agency problems
	   o communications
	   o command structure
	   o finances
	   o training
	• Strategy
	   o mobilization
	   o leadership
	   o ideology
	• Comparison of jihadist insurgencies in Iraq & Syria
	   o indoctrination
	   o relationship with Arab states
	   o command structure
	   o Zarqawi

Table 4. Outlines of ME-Syria & NA-Syria

	Islamism	Pan-Arabism	Secular Democracy
Context of social problems	• decline of Muslim *ummah*	• decline of the Arab nation	• modernization • freedom & human development
Cause of social problems	• apostate rulers & clerics • personal impiety	• the West & Arab elites • personal identity	• political & legal architecture • social, economic & cultural structures
Solution to social problems	• Muslim vanguard • personal transformation	• recognition & valuation of Arab identity	• institutions • procedures

Table 5. Central tenets of Islamist, pan-Arabist and secular democratic movements

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ESSAY 2
"NEITHER EAST NOR WEST:"
QARABA, SELF-ENHANCEMENT AND CONFORMITY

Assertions of the distinctiveness of the Middle East are a recurrent feature of that region's political discourse (e.g. Amin 1985). Thus, in their vision of state and society Islamists profess to "have something to give mankind that isn't one of the products of Western civilization or one of Eastern…genius (Qutb 1978: 14). Similarly, during the Islamic Revolution in Iran the belief that the Middle East required a singular political order prompted crowds to shout and banners to proclaim the slogan "Neither East nor West" (Keddie and Gasiorowski 1990). The central claim ventured in this article is that this catchphrase is equally applicable to the social psychology of the Middle East. Neither the construct of individualism (the "West") nor the construct of collectivism (the "East") succeeds in capturing the psychological tendencies of Middle Easterners. Rather, the psychological functioning of individuals in Middle Eastern contexts is best understood through the lens of a distinctive constellation of beliefs and values concerning the self and social relationships which I term *qaraba* ("closeness"). I test this claim through an exploration of how two psychological tendencies which are paradigmatic of individualism-collectivism, namely self-enhancement/self-effacement and preference for uniqueness/preference for conformity, manifest themselves in the Middle East.

Sociologists and psychologists have demonstrated that the cognitive, emotional and motivational structures and processes characteristic of individuals in different socio-

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cultural systems, particularly those of North America and East Asia, exhibit considerable variation (Kitayama and Cohen 2007; Heine 2008). The dimension of socio-cultural difference most often adduced to explain this variation is individualism-collectivism (Oyserman et al. 2002). Individualism is characterized by feelings of autonomy and detachment from groups, an emphasis on the accomplishment of "personal" goals which flow from the individual's preferences and desires, and relatively fluid entry into and exit from interpersonal relationships (Triandis 1995). Collectivism is characterized by close attachment to self-relevant groups, subordination of personal goals to those of the group, an emphasis on adherence to group norms, and relatively fixed sets of social relationships (Triandis 1995). These macro-level features of socio-cultural systems scaffold the institutions, practices and recurrent situations which form the everyday worlds of individuals.

As people engage with quotidian elements of their socio-cultural environment they develop mental models of the self, social relationships and agency, i.e. "blueprints for how to think, feel and act—how to be—in the world" (Markus and Hamedani 2007: 17). These mental models in turn organize and regulate psychological functioning. In individualistic socio-cultural systems action proceeds from the actor's own goals and preferences, greater attention is focused on the self than on the social environment and a central goal is to positively differentiate the self from others (Kitayama et al. 2007). Self-enhancement, i.e. the tendency to see oneself as better than is objectively the case, and a preference for uniqueness are thus characteristic of individualist cultural contexts (Fiske et al. 1998; Heine et al. 1999; Kim and Markus 1999). In collectivist socio-cultural systems, on the other hand, action acknowledges the preferences and

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goals of self-relevant others, attention is focused on the social environment and a central goal is to maintain harmony with valued others (Kitayama et al 2007). Self-effacement, i.e. the tendency to see oneself accurately or slightly worse than is objectively the case, and a preference for conformity are thus characteristic of collectivist cultural contexts (Fiske et al. 1998; Heine et al. 1999; Kim and Markus 1999). **Table 6** summarizes the relationship of self-enhancement and conformity to individualism and collectivism.

Social scientists have characterized every region of the globe in terms of individualism and collectivism. Western European and Anglo-phone societies are individualist. Eastern European, East Asian, South Asian, sub-Saharan African, Latin American and Middle Eastern societies are to varying degrees collectivist (Hofstede 1980; Triandis 1995; Oyserman et al. 2002). Although there has been little research on psychological sequelae of individualism-collectivism such as self-enhancement and preference for uniqueness outside of North American and East Asian settings, there appears to be a tacit assumption that these constructs accurately describe and predict the psychological tendencies of individuals in relatively unexplored cultural contexts such as the Middle East.[41] Nothing in the extant social psychological literature would suggest anything other than that, because the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system is a

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[41] My claim of this tacit assumption among cultural psychologists seems warranted given: a) as a discipline cultural psychology seeks to elucidate "systematic principles" rather than to describe particular socio-cultural systems, e.g. North America and East Asia (Markus and Hamedani 2007: 7; Oyserman and Lee 2007); b) research on cultural variation in psychological functioning is overwhelmingly concentrated on North America and East Asia (see below fn. 2). It must be the case, therefore, that North America and East Asia are regarded as representative of/paradigmatic for other cultural contexts.

collectivist one, individuals in that setting will tend—like individuals in prototypically collectivist East Asian settings—to exhibit self-effacement and a preference for conformity. More importantly, at least from a practical standpoint, the supposition that findings generated in East Asia are readily applicable to the Middle East informs the use of cultural psychology in public policy domains as well (UNDP 2005; Wunderle 2008; Klein and Kuperman 2008).

There are, however, both empirical and theoretical grounds for questioning the utility of individualism-collectivism as a construct through which to understand psychological functioning in the Middle East and how it differs from that characteristic of other socio-cultural systems. Knowledge of individualism-collectivism is for the most part derived from research in a very narrowly circumscribed set of socio-cultural contexts. The seminal sociological and anthropological studies of these cultural syndromes, e.g. Tonnies (1957), Bellah et al. (1986), Hsu (1983), and Doi (1985), examined North American, European and East Asian settings. Similarly, the explicit measures of self-construal and value-orientation typically used to assess individualism and collectivism, e.g. the Singelis Self-Construal Scale (Singelis 1994) and the INDCOL scale (Triandis 1995), were designed and validated in North American and East Asian contexts (cf. Harb and Smith 2008). Research on the psychological correlates of individualism and collectivism is also overwhelmingly concentrated in North America and East Asia. Moreover, the fundamental premise of the socio-cultural approach is that distinctive socio-cultural environments promote distinctive modes of psychological functioning (Markus and Hamedani 2007). Although it is not beyond the realm of possibility that

the "deep structures" of the Middle Eastern and East Asian socio-cultural systems coincide, differences in their readily observable features are quite glaring. There are few ostensible points of contact between the two with respect to physical and human ecology, economy, polity, religious thought and practice, language or historical trajectory (Hodgson 1974). Such lack of contiguity in the macro- and meso-level features of these two "collectivist" socio-cultural systems renders plausible the notion of variation in the psychological functioning of individuals located within them. There is thus ample justification for an exploration of psychological processes in the Middle East and how they differ from those observed in the prototypically individualist and collectivist socio-cultural systems of North America and East Asia.

In the first section of this article, therefore, I offer a relatively thick description of *qaraba*, a set of beliefs and values concerning the self and social relationships which—like individualism and collectivism in North American and East Asian settings—organizes and regulates psychological functioning.[42] The individual is held to be inseparable from the social environment, linked to others through relationships of negotiable hierarchy, and to be a "good" person, in the cultural sense, one must be both connected to and dominant over others.

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[42] The term *qaraba*, as I use it here, is a neologism. In the anthropological literature on the Middle East it refers to the quality of relationships within and between social units such as households, principally in tribal settings (e.g. Eickelman 1976, 1998). *Qaraba* is preferable to the semantically similar, but better known, term `*asabiyya* (loosely "group feeling"), since the latter tends to have a political valence (e.g. Ibn Khaldun 1967; Rosen 2008). It seems particularly apt in this context, in which I claim that "collectivism" as it is understood from research in East Asian settings fails to describe the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system, since the verbal root *q-r-b* can also mean "to clarify a concept" (s.v. Wehr 1994).

The second and third sections examine the relationship between *qaraba* and two paradigmatic domains of cultural difference in psychological functioning, preference for uniqueness and self-enhancement.   Conceptions of the self and the need for interpersonal connectedness foster a tendency to conform to self-relevant others (Studies 1 and 2). Conceptions of relationships and the need for dominance foster a tendency to self-enhance (Studies 3 and 4). This pattern differs markedly from that typically observed in either the individualist socio-cultural system of North America or the collectivist socio-cultural systems of East Asia. In the concluding section of the article I thus consider implications of these findings for social psychology beyond the familiar settings of North America and East Asia and suggest some ways in which knowledge of the distinctive psychology of the Middle East might enhance our understanding of the region's political landscape.

Qaraba

<u>Self-construal</u>

In the Middle East the self-in-relation-to-others, as opposed to the self as discrete and bounded, is the basic unit of self-construal. Middle Easterners tend to conceive of themselves "as group members rather than as independent individuals" and to regard the person as fundamentally inseparable from her social environment (Barakat 1993: 24). Individuals are defined and understood in terms of networks of interpersonal ties rather than internal attributes (Eickelman 1976; Rosen 1984). [43] Middle Eastern

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[43] Rosen (1984: 50) records one of his Moroccan informants as asserting "if I know who a man is, who he knows [and] who he deals with, I can tell why he does something," and suggests that this reflects a common sentiment among Middle Easterners.

sociologists (e.g. Barakat 1993), political scientists (e.g. UNDP 2005), anthropologists (e.g. Khuri 1990), and clinicians (e.g. Dwairy 1998) have identified the socio-centric self-concept as a core feature of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system. On explicit measures of self-construal Middle Easterners tend to be more collectivist and less individualist than European-Americans (Hofstede 1980; al-Zahrani et al. 1993; Oyserman et al. 2002).

Meaning systems, institutions, practices and products promote—and reflect—this form of self-understanding. Primary groups, particularly the household and extended family, serve as the basal unit of social interaction (Bates and Rassam 2001; Barakat 1993). Larger social aggregates such as neighborhoods, business enterprises, religious orders, and political parties form through the linkage of primary groups, and even non-kinship-based collectives tend to adopt the language and structure of the family (Nadim 1985; Nadim 1985; Khuri 1990). The success or failure of one individual is thus shared by all self-relevant others (Bates and Rassam 2001; Eickelman 1998). [44] Conventionally, one refers to adults as *abu*/*umm* ("father of…/mother of…") rather than by their proper names. [45] Individuals frequently label themselves and are labeled by others with a *nisba*, a lexeme which denotes some collective identity, e.g. *al-Masri* ("the Egyptian"). One might also note that in Islam,

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[44] A stereotypical phrase uttered in response to some good deed on the part of an individual is "How graceful the ancestors and descendants [of the actor]," and conversely a bad act may be greeted with "How miserable the ancestors and descendants [of the actor]" (Khuri 1990).

[45] For example, the president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, is more commonly known in both formal and informal settings as Abu Mazen ("Mazen's father"). Barakat (1993) suggests that the use of the *kunya* serves to erase individual identity.

literature and popular discourse a dominant metaphor for the individual is that of a link in a chain (Khuri 1990).

<u>Cultural mandate for connectedness</u>

This mental model of the self fosters a cultural mandate for interpersonal connectedness. [46]   An interdependent self-construal renders it both natural and desirable that individuals be "committed members of a group rather than…independent individuals who constantly assert their apartness and privacy" (Barakat 1993: 24). One is a "good" person to the extent that she is able to "cumulate a wide range of social ties" (Rosen 1984: 100). Although people everywhere value relationships with others, the goal of interpersonal connectedness is particularly central to the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system (Rosen 1984; Khuri 1990). "People," runs the Arabic proverb, "are for people" (Barakat 1993: 174). Successful incorporation into primary groups, e.g. the extended family, tribe or neighborhood, is believed to be absolutely requisite for material well-being in that, as noted above, such social units serve as the locus for economic production, marriage, leisure activities and political action (Glidden 1972). Formal and informal legal codes thus focus on the punishment of transgressions which compromise the individual's ability to establish and maintain social ties (Rosen 2008).

Middle Eastern social scientists suggest that interpersonal connectedness is also an important contributor to the subjective well-being of individuals in the region: "Arabs feel best when they are part of a group" (Khuri 1990: 16; Barakat 1993). The

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[46] Kitayama et al. 2009 define cultural mandates as "the ideals or general goal states that are strongly sanctioned and encouraged by a given cultural group" (237).

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corollary to the cultural valuation of connectedness is a devaluation of and aversion to independence or separation from a social group. An autonomous individual is held to be vulnerable to the predations of those who are tied to others (Khuri 1990). Aphorisms such as "to die with others is better than living alone" (Lunde and Wintle 1984: 80) and "paradise without others is unlivable" (Barakat 1993: 201) inculcate the need to avoid social isolation. Similarly in Islamic thought believers are incorporated into a community (e.g. Quran 2:143), but unbelievers are alone: "the unjust have no patron or helper" (Qu`ran 42:8).

Relational construal

Individuals in Middle Eastern contexts tend to conceive of their ties to others as taking the form of negotiable hierarchies. In any given relationship one actor is superordinate to another: "in Arab society you either dominate or are dominated" (Khuri 1990: 12). The entire social universe thus tends to be "conceived of in terms of dominance and deference" (Eickelman 1976: 141). Middle Eastern culture is characterized by an emphasis on the "moral equivalence" of individuals and the tendency to eschew hierarchies based on ascribed status (Lindholm 2002; Rosen 2008); a person occupies a dominant role not because of who she is but rather because of what she does. Individuals typically understand and experience dominance to be a function of imbalances in inter-personal obligations which they and others in the social environment create.[47] Many forms of social interaction, ranging from the distribution of material largesse or assistance in obtaining a marriage partner to

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[47] Other actions, e.g. material and physical coercion and the threat of such coercion, can also establish and maintain relationships of dominance (e.g. Dwairy 1998 on the incidence of and attitudes towards corporal punishment in Middle Eastern schools).

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greetings in public spaces, generate social debts or obligations (Eickelman 1976; Rosen 1984, 2008). The actor to whom a social debt is owed is super-ordinate to the one from whom repayment of the social debt is due; the former has *kalima* ("influence;" "authority") over the latter (Eickelman 1976). Contingent as it is on an asymmetry in social debts the occupancy of a dominant or deferent role is, at least notionally, negotiable and highly fluid (Khuri 1990). *Kalima* shifts if an individual acts so as to restore parity or reverse the imbalance of obligations, e.g. by offering more lavish hospitality than one has received. Only when an individual is incapable of repaying her social debt does the dominance-deference relationship assume some sort of permanence (Eickelman 1976). The inherent negotiability of hierarchies—coupled with the cultural valuation of dominance—introduces an agonistic element into social interactions. Rosen (1984) suggests that "every relationship between two Muslims incorporates an element of competition" (151).[48]

    Meaning systems, institutions and practices foster and reflect this understanding of social relationships. Individuals in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system perceive a wide variety of phenomena, ranging from seating arrangements to forms of address, to signal hierarchical status (Eickelman 1976; Khuri 1990). Islamic thought both recognizes and endorses the existence of social hierarchies (e.g. Quran 2:253; 56:10-12). Conversely, popular discourse tends to portray egalitarian relationships as anomalous. They are inherently unstable and a source of conflict, hence the proverb

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[48] Eickelman (1976), for example, notes that father-son relationships are frequently characterized by a struggle for dominance (cf. Mahfouz 1990 for the classic literary account); Khuri (1990) describes conflict over the super-ordinate role between cab-drivers and passengers and between merchants and customers.

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"a thousand debts before I become someone's partner" (quoted in Eickelman 1976: 143). Romantic love is—at least in literary sources—similarly viewed with misgivings in that it is characterized by an absence of concern for dominance and deference (Lindholm 2002).

<u>Cultural mandate for dominance</u>

Occupancy of the super-ordinate role in social relationships is a core concern of individuals in Middle Eastern settings, no less central than that of establishing and maintaining social relationships themselves (Khuri 1990; Lindholm 2002). Eickelman (1976) suggests that "each person strives to have "word" [i.e. *kalima*/influence] in social relations and at the same time tries to minimize situations in which he is obligated to others" (144). More trenchantly, the Lebanese anthropologist Khuri (1990) writes that "when two Arabs meet, the question is: who dominates whom" (24). While noting that for Middle Easterners "everybody's affection for his family and his group is more important than anything else," Ibn Khaldun observed that "there is scarcely one among them who would cede his power to another, even to his father, his brother or the eldest member of his family" (1967: 21, 97).

The imperative of interpersonal dominance flows, at least in part, from the tremendous value Middle Eastern culture assigns to personal sovereignty. Religious thought (e.g. "let there be no compulsion in religion: Quran 2:256), culture heroes (e.g. the fiercely independent desert nomad who is subservient to no one, Bates and Rassam 2001), political ideologies (Islamism: e.g. Qutb 1978; Arab nationalism, e.g. Aflaq 1948; Arab "reform," e.g. UNDP 2005) and twentieth century Arabic literature

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(Barakat 1993) all emphasize the need for the individual to be free from interpersonal constraint. An individual located in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system, in which social ties are self-defining and connectedness essential, cannot achieve personal sovereignty by disengaging from the social environment or disregarding the demands imposed by self-relevant others. Rather, she must negotiate social relationships in such a way so as to be the one who possesses *kalima*. Eickelman (1976) thus suggests that "the reason why dominance is so coveted in this system is that it allows a man to be autonomous, to assert his claim to be a full social person" (141). **Table 7** summarizes the principal features of *qaraba*.

Two Studies on *Qaraba* and Conformity

Given the interdependent self-construal and cultural valuation of interpersonal connectedness described above, one would anticipate that individuals in a Middle Eastern socio-cultural context tend to prefer—even in the absence of situational pressures—to be or to act like others in the social environment, i.e. to conform. Conformity in a Middle Eastern setting seems likely to be functional and adaptive in two ways: as a means of establishing and maintaining advantageous social ties and as a means of conflict-avoidance. Interpersonal relationships in this setting, even those within primary groups, tend to have an agonistic component (Lindholm 2002). The mere existence of biological ties and shared group memberships are not in themselves sufficient to achieve connectedness; rather, the individual must actively construct social relationships (Bates and Rassam 1998; Barakat 1993; Rosen 2008). Middle Easterners thus conform to others in order to establish or highlight commonalities which can serve as a basis for social bonds.

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Socially-adept individuals, for example, adopt or emphasize a *nisba,* i.e. a lexical marker of collective identity, common to others in the social environment (Rosen 1984). Moreover, since the salient and defining aspects of the individual are her social relationships rather than internal attributes such as her preferences, acts of conformity and non-conformity signal—or are assumed to signal—her posture towards others in the social environment (Sharabi 1977). Non-conformity implies the repudiation of or lack of interest in a social tie (Dwairy 1998). Layne (1987), for example, reports that in parliamentary elections rural Jordanians prefer to caste their votes orally, even feigning illiteracy so that they will not be compelled to use a written ballot. This practice affords the voter the opportunity to conform to or differentiate herself from self-relevant others through a public declaration of support for/rejection of their favored candidate, and thus communicates her willingness to perpetuate old social ties or sever them and form new ones.[49]

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[49] The foregoing begs the question of how individuals in a Middle Eastern context are able to reconcile conformity with the need for interpersonal dominance: conformity, after all, involves deference to others. Conformity has an instrumental value in the competition to occupy the superordinate role in relationships (Eickelman 1976). First, it facilitates the formation of social networks, and individuals with more social capital are likely to dominate those with less (Khuri 1990; Rosen 2008). Second, it reduces the friction and conflict latent in a social system in which every person wishes to dominate others. Khuri (1990) suggests that it is necessary for the individual to couple efforts at achieving dominance with efforts "to create an atmosphere of closeness and equality" (Khuri 1990: 27). Conformity is one means of doing so. Middle Eastern social critics, however, suggest that competing cultural imperatives are not easily reconciled and that the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system is characterized by a considerable degree of tension both within and between its members (Sharabi 1978; Dwairy 1998). Sharabi (1978), for example, suggests that *musayara* (adjustment to the wishes of self-relevant others) fosters *ightiyab* ("malicious gossip"), i.e. the expression of hostility towards these same others when they are not present.

Several features of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system foster—and reflect—the tendency to prefer conformity to uniqueness. A persistent feature of the social criticism ventured by Middle Eastern academics is the claim that childhood socialization practices promote conformity: "the family, the primary unit of Arab society is based on clannism and implants submission, and is considered the enemy of personal independence, intellectual daring, and the flowering of a unique and authentic human entity" (UNDP 2005: 17; Barakat 1993; Dwairy 1998). Popular aphorisms such as ""eat what you please, but wear what pleases others" (e.g. Mahfouz 1966: 51) broadcast the cultural valuation of conformity. Islamic thought promotes a reverence for *ijma* ("consensus") and an aversion to *bid`a* ("innovation") (Hodgson 1974; Ruthven 2006). Religious practices, e.g. communal prayer and communal fasting, would seem to support a preference for conformity. All Muslims are commanded, moreover, to ensure that others conform to community norms both in the public and private sphere (Cook 2003): "Let there be one community of you, calling to good, and commanding right and forbidding wrong" (Qur`an 3:104).

There is some evidence from research contexts to support the claim that Middle Easterners exhibit a tendency to conform. Effect sizes for Kuwaiti and Lebanese participants in Asch conformity studies were somewhat higher than those observed in North American settings (Smith and Bond 1998).[50] The Asch paradigm is, however, only minimally informative about cultural differences in conformity, since the

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[50] Interestingly, effect sizes for Middle Easterners were smaller than those observed in East Asia, Latin America and Africa: the effect size across the 2 Asch studies conducted in the Middle East was 1.31, vs. 1.42 for Japan, 1.93 for Hong Kong, 1.60 for Brazil and 1.84 for Africa (Smith and Bond 1998).

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majority of individuals conform in all cultures. More tellingly, Middle Eastern clinicians and social scientists describe a near ubiquitous pattern of behavior they term *musayara* ("adjustment"): "a lifestyle in which a person tends to bend to conform to the expectations of the other" (Dwairy 1998: 84). The individual engaged in *musayara* adjusts her speech and actions so as to harmonize with the social environment, sometimes consciously suppressing her own attitudes and preferences (Sharabi 1978).

The foregoing analysis of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system suggests that individuals in this setting tend to harmonize with rather than to differentiate themselves from others in the social environment. I offer a rigorous test of this hypothesis in the two studies presented below. Both studies explore cultural variation in the tendency to conform by examining preferences for common versus uncommon objects. In Study 1 participants indicate their preference for abstract figures which are either similar or dissimilar to others. In Study 2 participants engage in a routine social interaction in which they choose an everyday object which is either the same or different from others in the environment. I anticipated that individuals in a Middle Eastern setting would exhibit both a basic, decontextualized preference for conformity over uniqueness (Study 1) and a tendency to conform even when situational pressure to do so is absent (Study 2).

Study 1

Study 1 provides an initial test of the claim that the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system fosters a preference for conformity. Following Kim and Markus (1999) I predicted that the cultural valuation of conformity would manifest itself in judgments

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of non-social objects. Specifically, I hypothesized that when Middle Easterners were presented with arrays of abstract figures they would tend to like objects which are similar to others in the array more than objects which are dissimilar. I also sought to situate my findings within the broader context of research in cultural psychology by comparing Middle Eastern and North American participants.

Methods

   Participants and procedure. Eighty eight Middle Easterners (49 female; mean age 20.3 years) and 79 North Americans (30 female; mean age 20.8 years; all European-American) completed a questionnaire. North American participants were recruited at a private university in Northern California and received $10 for taking part in the study. Middle Eastern participants were recruited at a public university in Oman.[51] Their participation was voluntary, but regional social norms and university policy prohibited them from receiving monetary compensation for doing so. Omani experimenters distributed the questionnaires in the Middle Eastern setting; European-American experimenters distributed the questionnaire in the North American setting.

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[51] *Oman*. Oman is a country of some 2.6 million located on the Arabian Peninsula. It is a relatively wealthy country, ranking in the 73rd percentile globally with a per capita GDP of $19,000 (US Department of State 2008). Ninety seven percent of Oman's citizens are Muslim, the majority being Ibadis, a moderately conservative branch of Islam. Culturally, Omanis perceive themselves to be traditional. When asked what, if anything, differentiates Oman from other countries in the Middle East, a majority of study participants indicated the greater adherence of Omanis to Arab and Islamic norms and practices (Greenberg n.d.). *Research site*. The university at which the studies were conducted is located in Muscat, the nation's capital and its largest city. Approximately 12,000 students are enrolled at this school. Admission is competitive and tuition is provided by the state. The traditional Islamic separation of the sexes is maintained at this institution. Somewhat less than two-thirds of the participants (64%) reported family incomes which are high by Omani standards.

Materials. The Figure Independence Scale (Kim and Markus 1999; Kim and Sherman 2007) consists of 30 abstract figures, each composed of 9 subfigures, e.g. an array of 6 circles and 3 rectangles. Sixteen of the abstract figures contain 8 identical subfigures and 1 unique subfigure. For each of the 30 figures, participants ranked each subfigure in order of preference on a scale from 1 "favorite" to 9 "least favorite." Arabic and English versions of the FIS were produced, differing only in the language of the instructions. To ensure the accuracy of the Arabic version, the English original was translated into Arabic and then translated back into English by a second translator and compared to the original. The two translators involved in this process were native Arabic-speakers fluent in English.

Results

The average of the preference scores assigned to the unique sub-figure for the 16 Figure Independence Scale items which contained 8 similar and 1 dissimilar subfigures served as the dependent measure. Scores were reversed, so that higher scores indicated greater preference. To determine whether there were cultural differences in preference ratings for unique subfigures I performed a 2 (culture: North American vs. Middle Eastern) x 2 (gender: male vs. female) ANOVA with age as a covariate. A significant main effect of culture emerged, $F(1, 162) = 93.2$, $p < .001$, d $= 1.5$. There were no main effects for age or gender, nor any significant interactions. As **Figure 7** indicates, North American participants preferred unique subfigures more than Middle Eastern participants, $M = 6.9$, s.d. 1.7 vs. $M = 4.1$, s.d. $= 1.9$. I then compared the means for each culture group to the midpoint of the preference scale (5). Neither Middle Eastern nor North American participants had neutral evaluations of

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unique subfigures: ratings for Middle Eastern participants were significantly below the midpoint of the scale, $t(87) = -4.2$, $p < .001$, $d = .45$; North Americans' ratings were significantly above the midpoint of the scale, $t(78) = 10.1$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.1$.

Discussion

The results of this study support the hypothesis that individuals in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system tend to prefer conformity to uniqueness. Participants in a Middle Eastern context liked unique objects significantly and substantially less than did participants in a North American context. Moreover, Middle Eastern participants tended on average to dislike the unique objects, assigning them preference scores significantly lower than the mid-point of the rating scale. There is, however, an intuitively plausible interpretation of these findings which does not draw upon cultural valuations of conformity and uniqueness. Since mainstream Sunni culture tends to discourage pictorial representations of living beings geometrical forms with complex symmetries feature prominently in Islamic art (Hodgson 1974; Ruthven 2006). The unique subfigures may have distorted the symmetry of the abstract figures of which they were a part, and thus the preference ratings of Middle Eastern participants may have been affected by the aesthetics of the items used in this study to a greater extent than those of North Americans.

Study 2

Study 2 provides a further test of the hypothesis that the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system fosters a preference for conformity. In its use of a behavioral measure of conformity rather than a questionnaire it offers a useful complement to Study 1. In the course of a routine social episode participants were presented with the opportunity

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to choose between a relatively unique and a relatively common object (cf. Kim and Markus 1999). The object in question was a ball-point pen, an item of comparable import and value in Middle Eastern and North American settings and one not subject to culture-specific aesthetic concerns. I anticipated that individuals in a Middle Eastern context would be more likely to choose pens which were similar to others than would individuals in a North American setting.

Methods

Participants. Fifty three Middle Eastern (26 female; mean age 19.8 years) and 30 North American (13 female; mean age 19.2 years; all European-American) college students took part in the study. North American participants were recruited at a private university in Northern California. Middle Eastern participants were recruited at a public university in Oman. Both sets of participants received a ball-point pen for taking part in the study.

Materials and procedure.   Participants were asked by experimenters of the same gender and cultural background to fill out a questionnaire in exchange for a new pen. When the participant agreed, the experimenter displayed 5 ball-point pens and stated, "Please choose a pen for yourself. All of them write in black ink." The pens were identical to one another except for the color of the barrel, which was either green or purple. Pre-testing in both Middle Eastern and North American settings indicated that these colors were equally attractive. Pens were always displayed in combinations of either 4 green (purple) and 1 purple (green) or 3 green (purple) and 2 purple (green). The participant in all cases thus chose between a majority-color or minority-color pen.

Results

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The choice of a majority- or minority-color pen served as the dependent measure. To determine whether there was cultural variation in preference for majority- as opposed minority-color pens, I performed a 2 (culture: North American vs. Middle Eastern) x 2 (combination: one-four vs. two-three) x 2 (pen choice: majority-color vs. minority-color) loglinear analysis. There was a significant culture x choice interaction, χ^2 (1, N = 83) = 6.2, p < .05. There was no significant three-way interaction, χ^2 (1, N = 83) = 0.4, *ns*, and no significant combination x choice interaction, χ^2 (1, N = 83) = 3.5, *ns*. As **Figure 8** indicates, across both combinations 70.0% of North Americans chose the minority color pen, while only 39.6% of Middle Easterners did so. A 2 (culture: North American vs. Middle Eastern) x 2 (pen color: green vs. purple) x 2 (pen choice: majority-color vs. minority-color) loglinear analysis was also performed. There was no significant three-way interaction, χ^2 (1, N = 83) = .02, *ns*, no significant color x choice interaction, χ^2 (1, N = 83) = 1.1, *ns* and no significant color x culture interaction χ^2 (1, N = 83) = 1.2, *ns*. The choices made by Middle Eastern and North American participants were determined by a pen's similarity—or lack thereof—to the others; neither the color nor the particular ratio of majority- to minority-color pens had an effect.

Discussion

The results provide additional support for the hypothesis that individuals in Middle Eastern socio-cultural contexts tend to prefer conformity to uniqueness. Participants in a Middle Eastern setting were twice as likely to choose a majority-color pen as participants in a North American setting. Moreover, while the preferences of Middle Eastern participants in Study 1 might be plausibly explained by something other than

the cultural valuation of conformity, namely the aesthetics of the abstract figures in that study, no such alternative account presents itself for this set of results.

Two Studies on *Qaraba* and Self-enhancement

Given the tendencies to regard social relationships as hierarchies and to assign tremendous value to occupancy of a superordinate position, one would anticipate that individuals in Middle Eastern socio-cultural contexts tend to self-enhance. As they seek to answer the question of "who dominates whom" (Khuri 1990: 24), Middle Easterners measure themselves against one another. Such social comparison is likely to foster a tendency to see oneself as better than others since parity is something to be avoided (Lindholm 2002; see "Relational construal" above) and inferiority implies that one must be relegated to the devalued deferent role. Moreover, self-enhancement in a Middle Eastern setting seems likely to be functional and adaptive in two distinct ways. First, it may empower individuals in their competition for primacy in relationships. "Despise yourself," runs the Bedouin proverb, "and folks will despise you; take pride in yourself and folks will respect you" (Bailey 2004: 219). Heine et al. (1999) suggest that self-enhancement tends not to occur in East Asian settings because overly positive self-evaluations would hinder achievement of the cultural imperative to meet the expectations of self-relevant others; self-effacement, on the other hand, insures that individuals do not "under-perform." In a similar fashion, self-enhancement may energize individuals in Middle Eastern settings as they negotiate relational hierarchies; overly positive self-evaluations imply that one can and should occupy the culturally-valued dominant role. Second, self-enhancement may inoculate the individual against the distress caused by the inevitable instances when she is

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subordinate to others. Eickelman (1976) and Lindholm (2002) note that Middle Easterners tend, whenever possible, to avoid interacting with more dominant individuals, and it seems plausible that self-enhancement might serve a similar ego-defensive purpose.

Middle Eastern meaning systems and practices seem likely to foster self-enhancement. Islamic thought suggests that invidious social comparison is a natural feature of the social order ("the life of this world is play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting, and multiplying in rivalry among yourselves, riches and children," Quran 57:20), that Allah ranks human beings (e.g. Quran 2:253; 18:7), and that Muslims are "the best of all creatures" (Quran 98:7).[52] A medieval theologian, al-Muhasibi, could thus write "I am envied. May God increase the envy of me! May nobody live one day without being envied" (quoted in Lindholm 2002). Contemporary Islamic websites seek to promote positive self-regard, advising readers, for example, that "The principles of Islam advocate and nurture the development of a positive self-esteem" (Greenberg 2009). Agonistic social comparison features prominently in everyday life. Events such as marriages, births and graduations generate competitions, often involving elaborate acts of public display, in which

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[52] Heine (2007) suggests that the presence of self-enhancement in Western socio-cultural contexts and its absence in East Asian settings may be rooted in the Christian tradition with its fear of God's judgment in the former and the Buddhist tradition and the relative absence of concern for divine judgment in the latter. The individual anxious about her salvation is compelled to unceasingly ask of herself "Am I good enough?" Anxiety is relieved by the self-enhancing response—"I must be good enough, since most of those around me pale by comparison." A similar dynamic may contribute to self-enhancement in Middle Eastern settings (Greenberg 2009). Allah's judgment on the Last Day and the horrible punishments which await the sinner are central to Islamic thought (e.g. Quran 80:34-37).

individuals attempt to surpass one another in the number and magnitude of the gifts they give or receive (e.g. Singerman 1995). Similarly, Eickelman (1993) describes contests between new mothers in Oman who strive to have more well-wishers than their peers. Gilsenan (1996) notes that verbal jousting matches in which participants attempt to publicly humiliate their interlocutors are a common and important form of social interaction. Moreover, a variety of indigenous observers of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system ranging from novelists (e.g. Mahfouz 1990; Munif 1987) to social scientists (e.g. Ammar 1954; Hamady 1960; Barakat 1993) describe a tendency for individuals in this setting to make unrealistically positive self-evaluations.[53]

The foregoing analysis of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system suggests that individuals in this context tend to self-enhance. Self-enhancement is characterized by overly positive self-evaluations, and therefore the studies presented below explore how Middle Easterners tend to rate themselves relative to their peers. In Study 3 participants estimate the percentage of their peers who are superior with respect to a set of valued abilities and attributes. In Study 4 participants estimate the likelihood relative to their peers that they will experience positive and negative future events. In both cases normative, objectively accurate responses should lead the group of participants as a whole to rate themselves as neither better nor worse than their peers. I anticipated, however, that individuals in a Middle Eastern cultural context would

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[53] Mahfouz (1990), for example, offers the following description of protagonist of his *Cairo Trilogy* the Egyptian Everyman Ahmad Abd al-Jawad: "He was so self-confident that he believed himself superior to other men in looks, grace and elegance….His modesty also came to him naturally" (92).

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tend to see themselves as better than their peers with respect to abilities and attributes (Study 3) and future outcomes (Study 4).

Study 3

Study 3 offers an initial exploration of self-enhancement in a Middle Eastern cultural context. When individuals are motivated to see themselves in a positive light their self-assessments tend to be overly favorable. In this study I explore one such self-serving bias, the false uniqueness or better-than-average effect, i.e. the tendency to regard oneself as superior to one's peers with respect to some valued attribute. A substantial body of research has shown that people in individualist socio-cultural contexts, e.g. North America, exhibit the better-than-average effect, but people in collectivist contexts, e.g. East Asia, do not (Heine and Hamamura 2007). To the extent that the construct of collectivism is validly applied to the Middle East, individuals in that setting should not self-enhance. In light of the foregoing analysis of the relationship between *qaraba* and self-enhancement, I anticipated that Middle Eastern participants in this study would tend to exhibit a better-than-average effect.

Methods

Participants and procedure. Sixty-three Middle Eastern (35 female; mean age 20.5 years) and 61 North American participants (27 female; mean age 19.4 years; all European-American) completed a questionnaire. North American participants were recruited at a private university in Northern California and received $10 for taking part in the study. Middle Eastern participants were recruited at a public university in Oman. Their participation was voluntary, but regional social norms and university policy prohibited them from receiving monetary compensation. Omani experimenters

distributed the questionnaires in the Middle Eastern setting and European-American experimenters distributed the questionnaire in the North American setting.

Materials. The questionnaire, based on Markus and Kitayama (1991b), asked participants to estimate the percentage of students at their university of the same age and gender who were better than them with respect to seven positively-valued traits, e.g. intelligence and compassion. Reliability for this measure was adequate: Cronbach's alphas were .67 for Middle Eastern participants and .61 for European-American participants. An Arabic version of the original English-language measure was generated through standard methods of translation-back translation. The two translators involved in this process were native Arabic-speakers fluent in English.

Results

The percentage of fellow students of the same age and gender whom participants estimated to be better than themselves was averaged across all seven items and served as the dependent measure. Assuming that participants in each culture group are more or less representative of the students at their respective universities, unbiased responses on the questionnaire should produce group averages approximating 50%: some students in each sample will be worse than other students, some better. The better-than-average effect can be said to occur, therefore, when on average a culture group estimates that less than 50% of fellow students are better than themselves with respect to the measured traits.

To reduce skewness a square root transformation was performed on the data prior to analysis. I first examined whether the self-evaluations of North American and Middle Easterners participants were biased, i.e. whether either group exhibited the

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better-than-average effect. To do so I compared the means of each group with an unbiased estimate of 50%. The self-evaluations of the North American participants differed significantly from 50%, $M = 37.9$, $t(60) = -7.8$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.0$. The self-evaluations of the Middle Eastern participants also differed significantly from 50%, $M = 31.7$, $t(62) = -11.2$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.5$. Next I examined whether there were cultural differences in the magnitude of the better-than-average effect. I performed a 2(culture: Middle Eastern vs. North American) x 2(gender: male vs. female) ANOVA with age as a covariate. A significant main effect of culture emerged, $F(1, 119) = 10.8$, $p = .001$, $d = .58$. As **Figure 9** indicates, Middle Eastern participants exhibited a stronger better-than-average effect than did their North American counterparts, i.e. they reported that a smaller percentage of their fellow students were better than they themselves were with respect to valued abilities and attributes. There were no significant main effects for gender or age, nor was there a significant gender-culture interaction. Slightly over ninety-five percent of the participants in the Middle Eastern setting offered overly favorable self-evaluations, while only 80.3% of participants in the North American setting did so, $\chi^2(1) = 6.5$, $p < .05$, $\varphi = .23$.

Discussion

The results support the hypothesis that individuals in a Middle Eastern socio-cultural context tend to self-enhance. On average Middle Eastern participants in this study estimated that only 32% of their peers were superior with respect to valued abilities and attributes; had they assessed themselves in a normative or unbiased fashion, the estimate would have been 50%. Surprisingly, not only were the Middle Eastern participants self-enhancing in an absolute sense, but their self-evaluations

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were even more biased than those of individuals in a North American context, and self-serving biases were more prevalent in the former group than in the latter. These findings are difficult to reconcile with a characterization of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system as "collectivist."

Study 4

Study 4 provides an additional test of the claim that individuals in Middle Eastern settings tend to self-enhance. It explored a different manifestation of self-enhancement, namely unrealistic optimism, i.e. the belief that one is less likely to experience negative future life events and more likely to experience positive future life events than similar others (Heine and Lehman 1995). As is the case with the better-than-average effect, unrealistic optimism is characteristic of individualist socio-cultural systems such as North America, but not of the collectivist socio-cultural systems of East Asia (Heine and Hamamura 2007). Thus to the extent that the construct of collectivism is validly applied to the Middle East, individuals in that setting should not exhibit unrealistic optimism. I anticipated, however, that given the cultural propensity for self-enhancement Middle Eastern participants in this study would tend to be unrealistically optimistic.

Methods

Participants and procedure. Thirty-seven Middle Easterners (21 female; mean age 20.4 years) and 44 North Americans (25 female; mean age 19.7 years; all European-American) completed a questionnaire. North American participants were recruited at a private university in Northern California and received $5 for taking part in the study. Middle Eastern participants were recruited at a public university in Oman. Their

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participation was voluntary, but regional social norms and university policy prohibited them from receiving monetary compensation. Omani experimenters distributed the questionnaires in the Middle Eastern setting; European-American experimenters distributed the questionnaire in the North American setting.

Materials. The questionnaire, based on Heine and Lehman (1995), contained 32 items describing positive and negative life events, e.g. receiving an award and having a nervous breakdown. Participants indicated how likely they were relative to other students at their university of the same age and gender to experience these events on a scale ranging from 1 "much below average" to 7 "much above average." The measure contained nine positive and 23 negative positive life items. The reliability of both the positive-event and negative-event subscales was good: Cronbach's alphas for the positive-event subscale were .78 and .80 for Middle Eastern and North American participants respectively, and .76 and .93 for the negative-event subscale for Middle Eastern and North American participants respectively. An Arabic version of the original English-language measure was generated through standard methods of translation-back translation. The two translators involved in this process were native Arabic-speakers fluent in English.

Results

Scores for negative life events were reversed so that higher scores indicated greater optimism for all items. Unrealistic optimism was operationalized as a score significantly higher than the midpoint, 4 "average," of the 7-point scale described above. I first examined whether the likelihood estimates of Middle Eastern and North American participants were biased, i.e. whether either group exhibited unrealistic

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optimism. To do so I compared the means for each group with the midpoint of the scale. Middle Eastern participants exhibited unrealistic optimism. Their mean of 5.1 (SD = .60) was significantly greater than the scale midpoint, $t(36) = 11.0$, $p < .001$, $p_{rep} > .99$, $d = 1.8$. North American participants were also biased, $M = 4.7$ (SD = .47), $t (43) = 9.9$, $p < .001$, $p_{rep} > .99$, $d = 1.5$. I then examined whether there were cultural differences in the magnitude of unrealistic optimism. A 2 (culture: North American vs. Middle Eastern) x 2 (gender: male vs. female) ANOVA with age as a covariate revealed a significant main effect of culture, $F(1, 76) = 9.2$, $p = .003$, $p_{rep} = .98$, $d = .13$ (see Fig. 4). There were no significant effects of age or gender, nor interactions involving these factors. As **Figure 10** indicates, Middle Eastern participants exhibited greater unrealistic optimism than did North American participants.

Discussion

The results offer further support for the hypothesis that individuals in Middle Eastern socio-cultural systems tend to self-enhance. Middle Eastern participants in this study tended to be unrealistically optimistic, believing that they were more likely to experience positive and less likely to negative future events than their peers. Remarkably, given past research on self-enhancement in non-Western contexts, Middle Eastern participants tended to be even more unrealistically optimistic than North Americans.

General Discussion

I explored self-enhancement and conformity in an important but under-investigated socio-cultural system, the Middle East. Studies 1 and 2 support the hypothesis that individuals in a Middle Eastern setting prefer conformity to uniqueness. Middle

Eastern study participants tended to evaluate objects which were similar to others more favorably than objects which were dissimilar and tended to choose relatively common objects more often than relatively uncommon objects. Studies 3 and 4 support the hypothesis that individuals in this cultural context tend to self-enhance. Not only did participants in a Middle Eastern setting display unrealistic optimism and the better-than-average effect, but their self-evaluations were significantly more biased than those of participants in a North American context.

<u>Implications for social psychology</u>

Given the routine characterization of the Middle East as collectivist (Hofstede 1980; Oyserman et al. 2002; Harb and Smith 2008), one would have anticipated that a study of conformity and self-enhancement in this setting would have yielded few surprises. The Middle Eastern constellation of a preference for conformity *and* self-enhancement is, however, "neither East nor West." It is, as **Table 8** suggests, not consonant with either individualism or collectivism as these constructs are currently understood. A preference for conformity is characteristic of individuals in the prototypically collectivist cultures of East Asia individuals, but self-enhancement—particularly self-enhancement of a magnitude which surpasses that of individuals in the prototypically individualist culture of North America—is not (Kitayama et al. 2007).[54] Psychological functioning in the Middle East seems best understood through

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[54]Alternatively, one might regard the results of Studies 3 and 4 as evidence that self-enhancement is a pan-cultural phenomenon (e.g. Sedikides and Gregg 2008). Interestingly, proponents of this claim cite a study conducted among Palestinian citizens of Israel in support of their position (Kurman 2004). Aside from the question of whether generalizations are possible from this unique participant population, it

the lens of *qaraba* rather than individualism-collectivism: beliefs concerning the nature of the self foster a cultural mandate for interpersonal connectedness and this in turn promotes a tendency to prefer conformity to uniqueness; beliefs concerning the nature of social relationships foster a cultural mandate for interpersonal dominance and this in turn promotes a tendency to self-enhance. These findings strongly suggest a need for social psychologists to conduct research in socio-cultural systems other than those of North American and East Asia (Cohen 2007; Morling and Lamoreaux 2008). Although the (sub-)discipline of cultural psychology seeks to identify general principles governing the relationship between culture and psyche rather than to offer thick descriptions of the world's myriad socio-cultural systems, the Middle Eastern case indicates that the former requires the latter. The centrality of the culture-specific construct of *qaraba* to an understanding of psychological functioning in the Middle East further suggests that as social psychologists situate their research outside of the familiar domains of North America and East Asia, they will need to acquire considerable knowledge of the macro-, meso- and micro-level features of the particular socio-cultural systems they study (e.g. Adams 2005).

Application to real-world phenomena

   At present US policy-makers are discussing how to best address the threat posed by the Iranian nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs (e.g. Blair 2010). An appropriate US response requires an accurate understanding of how Iranian decision-makers perceive the strategic environment. Achieving this understanding is rendered

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seems more fruitful, to regard self-enhancement in the Middle East as the outcome of culture-specific beliefs and values and concepts.

difficult, however, by the tendency for Iranian leaders to offer grandiose and objectively unrealistic assessments of their military strength. Iranian spokesmen routinely exaggerate, and sometimes falsify, the performance of new weapons systems (Blair 2010). President Ahmadi-nejad has repeatedly boasted that "no one can defeat us" (New York Times 2007) and claimed that "our armed forces have so much power that no enemy will harbor evil thoughts about laying its hands on Iranian territory (AP 2010). How is such discourse to be understood? Some have suggested that individual Iranian leaders are simply delusional; they sincerely believe and are likely to act on the basis of such fanciful evaluations of Iranian might (cf. Post and Baram 2002). Others maintain that Iranian decision-makers are engaged in rhetorical posturing; they themselves do not believe exaggerated public claims of national strength, but use such statements as a means of garnering domestic support and concessions from the West (Bueno de Mesquita 2009). The foregoing analysis of *qaraba*, self-enhancement and conformity suggests an alternative account of this pattern of behavior.

As a starting point, one might note that the propensity for unrealistic assessments of national strength appears to be a Middle Eastern, rather than a particularly Iranian, phenomenon. During the Six Day War President Nasser of Egypt reported to King Hussein of Jordan that his forces had achieved an impressive victory over the Israelis; the Egyptians had, in fact, suffered a crushing defeat (Hussein 1969). Prior to the 1991 and 2003 US invasions of Iraq, Saddam Hussein predicted an Iraqi victory both in public speeches and privately to his top advisers; in both instances Iraqi forces were routed (Woods et al. 2006). "Baghdad Bob," the Iraqi Minister of Information Mohammed al-Sahhaf, famously reported at an April 2003 news conference that US

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forces had been turned back; at that very moment American troops were occupying Baghdad (Ricks 2007). Of particular relevance to the Iranian case, at least some mid- and high-level Iraqi decision-makers believed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and/or a robust weapons development program (Woods et al. 2006). This belief, of course, turned out to be false, but the inability to properly interpret such Iraqi discourse may have contributed to the failure to correctly assess the state of the Iraqi WMD program. Myriad other instances of overly positive evaluations of military strength on the part of Middle Easterners could be adduced (e.g. Pollack 2002).

The analysis of this phenomenon presented here makes two assumptions. First, Middle Eastern decision-makers, like political and military leaders everywhere, do not simply fabricate or invent their assessments of national strength. Second, Middle Eastern leaders do not have direct knowledge of the events/states upon which assessments of national strength are based, e.g. how many "enemy" tanks were destroyed or how far a new missile can fly. Rather, they depend on reports that originate with individuals who do have direct knowledge of relevant events/states, e.g. soldiers on the battlefield and research scientists conducting tests, and are then transmitted through an institutional hierarchy. These individuals, I would suggest, tend to generate unrealistically positive evaluations of their own performance, exaggerating, for example, how well they have performed in a military encounter or how successfully a weapon they have developed has performed. The causes of this tendency are threefold. First, there is a general cultural propensity for self-enhancement. Assessments of military strength and performance lend themselves to self-enhancement, moreover, because these domains are complex and ambiguous,

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lacking clearly defined metrics for success and failure. Second, positive self-evaluations allow the individual to assert or maintain dominance vis-à-vis peers and institutional superiors, whereas negative self-evaluations threaten the individual's position relative to self-relevant others. Third, individuals routinely maintain connectedness with others through acts of verbal conformity, *musayara*, i.e. saying what they anticipate others want to hear; in this instance institutional superiors might be expected to want to hear about successes rather than failures. Mid-level officials accept and transmit the unrealistic assessments of individuals with direct knowledge of relevant events/states because the same set of social psychological forces—the tendency to self-enhance, the cultural imperative of interpersonal dominance, and the tendency to conform—act on them as well. In addition, the cultural valuation of connectedness and the attendant propensity to engage in *musayara* or adjustment discourages mid-level officials from challenging the veracity of assessments offered by their subordinates even if they seem to be unduly positive.[55] High-level decision-makers thus receive skewed reports, and they, like mid-level officials, are motivated to accept such assessments at face value.

This model finds empirical support from two sources. First, in the aftermath of the Six Day War and President Nasser's embarrassing claims of victory over Israel,

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[55] Eickelman (1976), for example, records an instance in which his Moroccan informant asked a friend to accompany him on a trip to a neighboring city. The friend agreed but then failed to show up on the appointed day. He later offered a patently false excuse for his absence which the Moroccan informant, although recognizing it to be fictive, simply accepted without question. Eickelman (1976) interprets this episode in terms of the needs for connectedness and dominance: the friend could not directly refuse the informant's request, because to do so would cause friction and possibly lead to a severing of the social tie; for a similar set of reasons the informant could not challenge his friend's excuse.

Egyptian policy-makers and social critics conducted a lengthy post-mortem of the country's military performance (Pollack 2002). They found that the reportage of battlefield commanders was wildly inaccurate, often consisting of fictive claims of success against the Israelis. Mid-level officers failed to challenge these reports and simply passed them up the chain of command to high-level decision-makers, who remained unaware of the true state of affairs for much of the conflict (Pollack 2002).[56] Second, subsequent to the fall of Saddam's regime US analysts conducted interviews with members of the Iraqi senior leadership and carried out an extensive review of documents and other communications in order to determine the factors driving Iraqi decision-making prior to and during the war (Woods et al. 2006). They discovered that the infamous "Baghdad Bob" incident described above was driven by false reports emanating from battlefield and mid-level commanders. Similarly, Saddam Hussein's overly sanguine predictions of Iraqi victory in 1991 and 2003 were attributable, at least in part, to the positive assessments of Iraqi military strength which he received from his staff. Lastly, scientists and bureaucrats within the Military Industrial Commission and other regime elements charged with developing "special weapons" routinely reported to their superiors that they had achieved success in their programs, when in fact little or no research was being carried out (Woods et al. 2006). Such reports may have fostered a belief among some senior Iraqi leaders that they possessed or could easily develop weapons of mass destruction. In short, both the Egyptian and Iraqi cases, the only ones for which Western observers have detailed insight into how

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[56] Interestingly, Egyptian military officials and social critics attributed false claims of success on the battlefield to Arab culture (e.g. Heikal 1975; Patai 1976).

assessments of national strength are generated within Middle Eastern contexts, supports the analysis presented here.

The exaggerated claims of military strength offered by Iranian leaders should in all likelihood neither be dismissed as the product of psychopathology nor as the product of cynical calculation. Iranian decision-makers are likely to sincerely hold erroneous beliefs about their nation's military capabilities, but they arrive at these assessments through a rational process, namely by assimilating the information provided to them through the relevant institutional structures. A corollary of this analysis is that a change in the senior leadership of Iran, e.g. a victory by the "Green" movement, would be unlikely to alter Iranian perceptions of the strategic environment.

Conclusion

In examining both a relatively unexplored culture area—the Middle East—and identifying an apparently unique constellation of psychological tendencies—self-enhancement and a preference for conformity—this research adds to our understanding of the ways in which socio-cultural systems shape psychological processes. The culture-specific construct of *qaraba* marks an advance over the application of individualism-collectivism to Middle Eastern contexts, and the findings presented here may help to settle the debate over whether—and why—self-enhancement and preferences for conformity (Heine and Hamamura 2007; Yamagishi et al. 2008) are culturally-variant phenomena. Lastly, this research suggests the possibility that culture-specific modes of psychological functioning explored here play a non-trivial role in the political domain.

	Self-evaluation	**Relation to social environment**
Individualism	Self-enhancement	preference for uniqueness
Collectivism	Self-effacement	preference for conformity

Table 6. Psychological tendencies associated with individualism-collectivism

	Core beliefs	**Core goals**	**Psychological tendencies**
Self	interdependent self-construal self-in-relation-to-others	connectedness "People are for people"	preference for conformity
Social relationships	relationships are hierarchical positions within hierarchies are negotiable/achieved	dominance "Be an *aliph*"[i]	self-enhancement

Table 7. Central features of *qaraba*

	Individualism/ North America	**Qaraba/ Middle East**	**Collectivism/ East Asia**
preference for conformity	NO	YES	YES
self-enhancement	YES	YES	NO

Table 8. Psychological tendencies associated with individualism, collectivism and *qaraba*
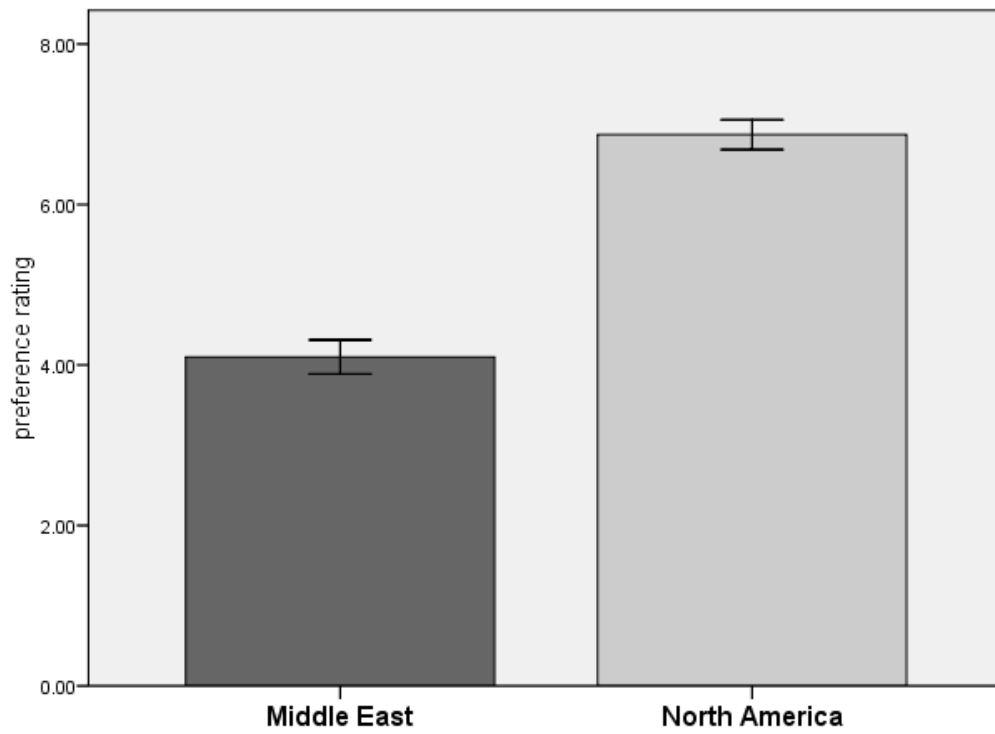
Figure 7. Preference ratings for unique abstract figures by culture. Scale ranges from 0 "least favorite" to 9 "most favorite." Error bars indicate standard errors.
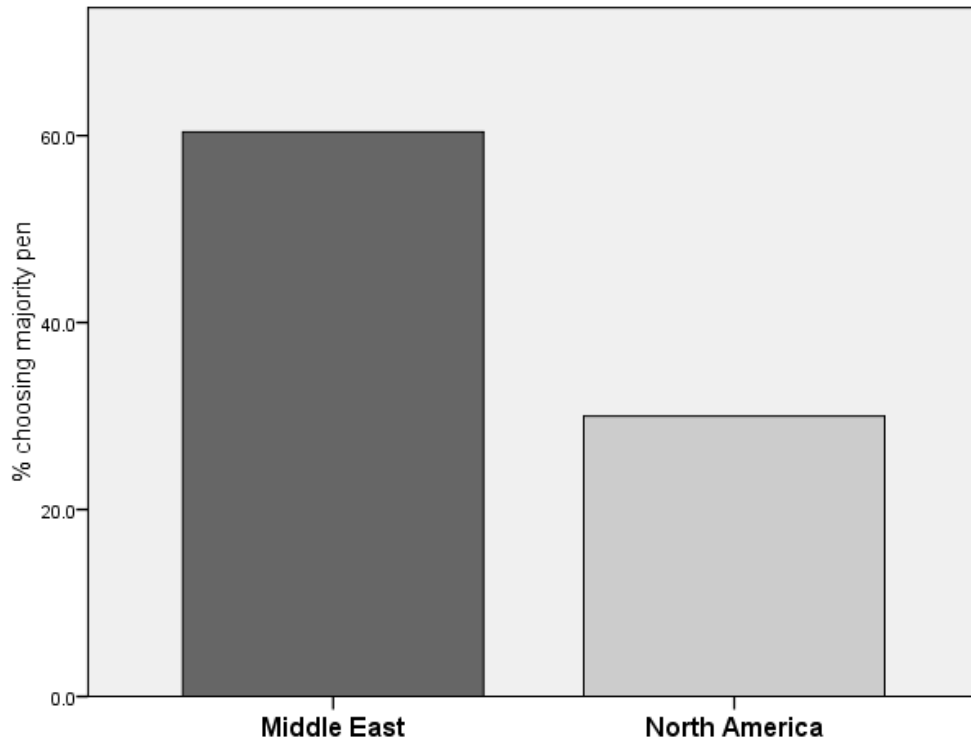
Figure 8. Percentage of participants in each culture choosing majority color pens.
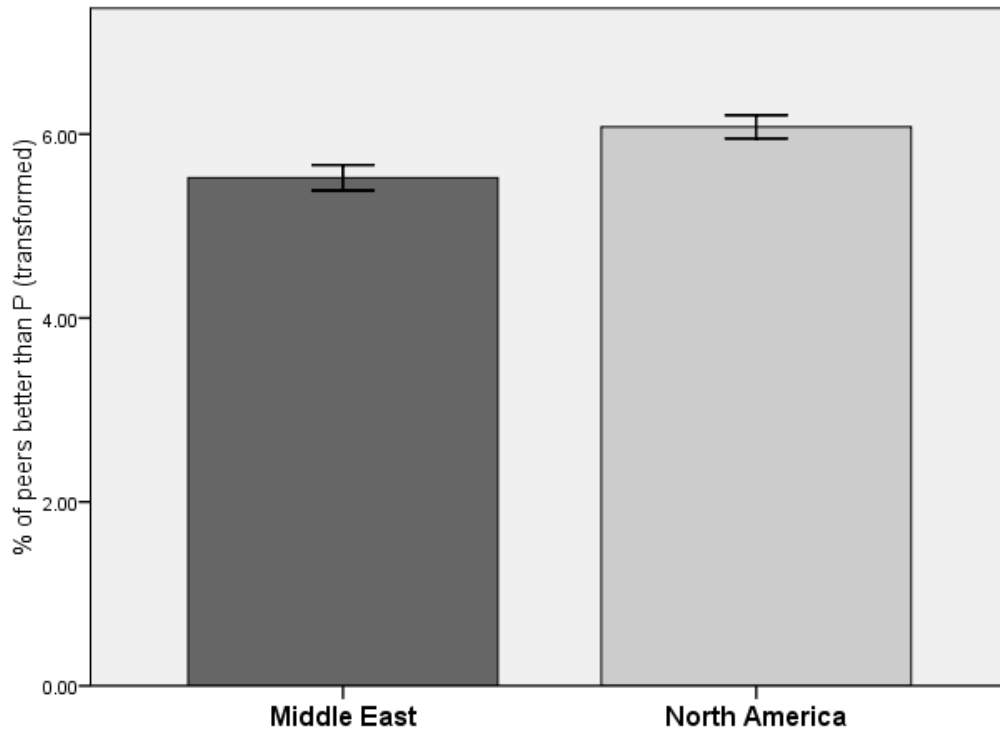
Figure 9. Percentage of peers whom participants estimate to be better than themselves in each culture. Lower scores indicate greater self-enhancement. Error bars indicate standard errors.
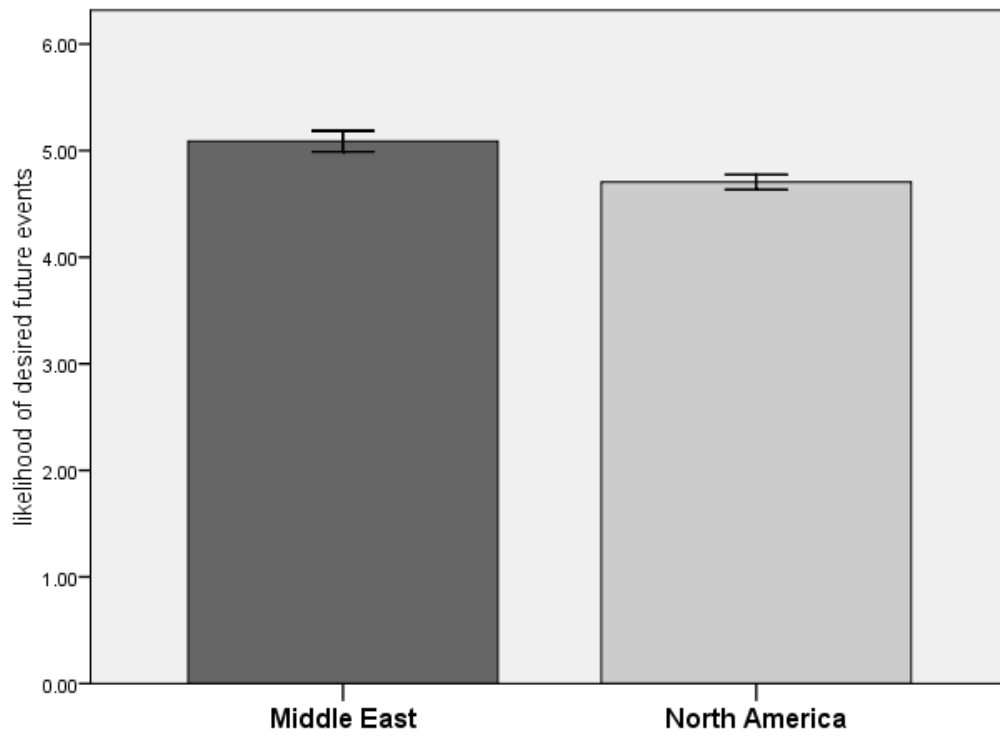
Figure 10. Likelihood of experiencing desired future outcomes by culture. Scale ranges from 0, likelihood is "much below average" to 7, likelihood is "much above average." Error bars indicate standard errors.

ESSAY 3
"TEARS FOR HUSAYN:"   ALLOCENTRIC EMOTION
IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AMERICA

Whoever weeps or causes others to weep for Husayn will enter paradise.
--Shi`a proverb[57]

Of the 102 individuals who carried out suicide bombings in Iraq ca. 2003-2006 and whose national origins are known, only 7 were Iraqis; the other 93% hailed from the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, and Europe (Hafez 2007a).[58] Perhaps even more remarkable than this statistic are the personal odysseys underlying it. Typical, at least according to the "biographies of eminent martyrs" often posted on jihadist websites, is that of Abu Osama al-Maghribi (Hafez 2007b). A successful and happily married Moroccan businessman, al-Maghribi longed for nothing more than to be a father. For several years he and his wife struggled to conceive a child. Soon after al-Maghribi had decided to join the jihad, his wife informed him of the joyous news: at long last she was pregnant. Although perfectly free to have remained in Morocco and fulfilled his dream of fatherhood, al-Maghribi embarked on the arduous journey to Iraq and joined an al-Qa`ida cell operating in that country. Once there, he learned that his wife had given birth to the long-awaited son. Shortly thereafter al-Maghribi drove a car

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[57] Cited in Richard (1995: 97).

[58] Roughly 58% of attackers remained unidentified as of 2007 (Hafez 2007a); it is possible that Iraqis constitute a sizeable percentage of those whose identities are unknown. That said, even if all of the unidentified suicide bombers were Iraqi, which seems highly unlikely (al-Rasheed 2010), the proportion of non-Iraqis remains a surprisingly high 39%.

laden with explosives into the UN compound in Baghdad, killing himself and an Iraqi police officer.

What, one wonders, could motivate al-Maghribi and others like him to leave home, family and everything they held dear, to trek to Iraq, and to destroy themselves and others in that alien land? Social scientists have elaborated a number of theories to account for this phenomenon, adducing factors such as ideological commitment (e.g. Kepel 2002), dissatisfaction with social and economic conditions (e.g. Krueger and Maleckova 2009), group dynamics (e.g. Sageman 2009), and psychopathology (e.g. Victoroff 2009). Jihadists themselves, however, appear to regard individuals' emotions, specifically emotions elicited by events involving someone other than the individuals themselves, as the principal catalyst motivating non-Iraqis to serve as suicide bombers in Iraq: "jihadists in Iraq strategically deploy emotional narratives…to appeal to recruits from around the Muslim world" (Hafez 2007b: 95). Jihadist recruiting videos contain little ideological or theological material, but rather seek to generate a particular set of emotions in the viewer (Hafez 2007a). The "first act" of recruiting videos tends to consist of graphic images and/or oral narratives of the Iraqi women and children subjected to violence, sexual abuse and degradation set to doleful music. Viewers will, it is hoped, experience sadness and compassion for the victims and outrage at the perpetrators. The "second act" typically consists of footage of Arab leaders, policeman and soldiers smiling, laughing and even dancing with their American counterparts. Such images are intended to elicit feelings of anger, frustration and powerlessness as viewers witness the seeming indifference of many in the Arab/Muslim world to the horrors depicted in the first act of the video. In the

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"third act" the hero of the piece, the suicide bomber, appears. His brave and determined appearance contrasts starkly with that of the buffoonish soldiers, policeman and political leaders of the second act. To the accompaniment of stirring music he prepares for and successfully carries out an attack on those who so brutally violated Iraqi women and children in the video's opening scenes. This footage seeks to arouse feelings of joy and relief as the injustice and suffering of the first act are requited, and—more importantly—admiration and envy for the noble and courageous martyr.

Active participation in terrorism is a very rare and highly atypical, though practically important, phenomenon in Middle Eastern settings (Roy 2007). But powerful emotional responses to events in which the individual is not directly involved—of which the predominance of non-Iraqi suicide bombers in Iraq provides a particularly striking example—may well be a characteristic feature of psychological functioning in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system. I use the term *allocentric*, i.e. "other-oriented," emotions to describe affective states which arise when something happens not to the person experiencing the affective state but rather to some other person or group of persons.[59] The central claims of this paper are that individuals in Middle Eastern contexts tend to experience allocentric emotion more frequently and intensely than do individuals in North American settings, that Middle Easterners tend to differ from North Americans in the types of events which elicit allocentric

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[59] Triandis (1995) uses the term "allocentric" to describe an orientation to/focus on others in the social environment. As noted below, the phrase allocentric emotion encompasses a variety of emotion phenomena, all of which are likely to differ across Middle Eastern and North American contexts.

emotions, and that this cultural variation is attributable to specific features of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system.[60] The first section of this paper elaborates the concept of allocentric emotion and outlines the extant research. In the second section I describe the elements of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system which seem likely to afford and promote allocentric emotions. The third section presents three studies which support the claims that individuals in Middle Eastern settings experience allocentric emotions more frequently, more intensely and differently than do North Americans. I conclude the paper with an agenda for future research and a brief discussion of some of the ways in which an apprehension of cultural variation in allocentric emotion might enhance our understanding of political and social life in the Middle East.

Allocentric Emotion: Definition and Research

<u>Definition</u>

Allocentric emotions may be defined colloquially as emotions which arise in response to events or states which happen to someone else. Idiocentric emotions, on the other hand, are those which arise in response to events or states which happen to oneself. Thus, Sue's sadness on learning that her neighbor has a fatal disease is an allocentric emotion, whereas Sue's sadness on learning the she herself has a fatal disease is an idiocentric emotion. More formally, allocentric emotions are "biologically-based patterns of perception, experience, physiology, action and

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[60] Here the term *the Middle East* and its cognates refer to the nation-states of North Africa, the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq. The first paper in this series, "Cultural variation in reasoning about complex political and military events" offers an extended discussion of this definition.

communication" elicited by another actor's "physical and social challenges and opportunities" (adapted from Niedenthal et al. 2006: 6).

<u>Extant research</u>

Social psychologists have described several distinct forms of allocentric emotion: inter-group emotion, socially-engaged emotion, emotion contagion, empathy, envy, and schaudenfreude. To date research in this domain has focused only on individuals in North American and European, and to a lesser extent East Asian, settings. There appears to be no extant scholarship exploring allocentric emotion in the Middle East.[61] Below I summarize research on the most extensively described facets of allocentric emotion and the relevance of this research to the study of psychological functioning in Middle Eastern settings.

Inter-group emotion. Inter-group emotion theory (IET) developed in response to the asocial conception of emotion underlying much social psychological research. Gordjin et al (2001) note that "the idea that people ought to be personally involved in events is often presented as a prime condition for emotional reactions to occur" (318). IET theorists reason, however, that since group identities and memberships constitute central aspects of the self-concept (e.g. Tajfel 1982), an event which affects self-relevant social groups as a whole or members of self-relevant social groups is likely to elicit emotions in individuals who are not themselves directly involved in the eliciting event (Mackie and Smith 1998). Such "group-level" emotions tend to differ from

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[61] Some studies have explored collective guilt and collective or inter-group anger among Israelis (e.g. Halperin 2008). Despite their geo-graphical proximity, the Israeli socio-cultural system and the attendant psychology of Israelis seem likely to differ considerably from the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system and the attendant psychology of Middle Easterners.

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individual-level emotions—responses to the question "how do you feel" differ from "how do you feel as an American"—and tend to converge, i.e. within a social group the affective states individuals feel *qua* group members tend to be similar (Smith et al. 2007). Group-level emotion is, unsurprisingly, positively correlated with group identification (Smith et al. 2007). Akin to inter-group or group-level emotions are the emotions associated with "basking-in-reflected-glory" or BIRG (Cialdini et al. 1976) and "cutting-off-reflected-failure" or CORF (Snyder et al. 1986). Individuals may feel positive or negative affect when members of a self-relevant social group succeed or fail at some task even if the outcome has no material or social consequences for those experiencing the emotion. Obvious examples of BIRG and CORF are fans' emotional responses to the outcomes of sporting events.

Intergroup emotion researchers focus almost exclusively on affective states elicited by membership in national groups, e.g. US citizenship (Moons et al. 2009; Seger et al. 2009). Anecdotal evidence, e.g. the frequency and intensity of street protests throughout the Middle East elicited in response to events in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, raises the possibility of heightened inter-group emotion involving national and ethnic identities in this cultural context (Bayat 2010).[62] On the other hand, Brewer and Yuki (2007) report that symbolic identities are less central to the self-concept in the non-Western cultures which they studied, raising the possibility that inter-group emotions associated with membership in national and ethnic groups may be less pronounced in the Middle East than in other settings.

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[62] Non-psychological factors such as government sponsorship and the large number of under-employed individuals available to take part in protests are, however, likely to be the principal drivers of these demonstrations.

Socially-engaged emotion. Individuals in collectivist socio-cultural systems tend to experience "socially-engaged emotions," i.e. affective states such as feelings of closeness, shame and pity which support and reflect the cultural imperative of connectedness with others. People in individualist socio-cultural systems, on the other hand, are more likely to experience "socially-disengaged" emotions such as anger, pride and jealousy which support and reflect the cultural imperative of positively differentiating the self from others (Kitayama et al. 2000).

Socially-engaged/disengaged emotion is one of the few forms of allocentric emotion to have received extensive study outside of Western settings. Unfortunately, research has thus far been limited to East Asian contexts. As I discuss at greater length below, cultural imperatives in the Middle East tend to differ markedly from those characteristic of the East Asian (and North American) socio-cultural system. Socially-engaged emotion thus seems likely to take different forms in Middle Eastern contexts as well.

Empathy and emotion contagion. Both empathy and emotion contagion are allocentric emotions elicited not by an event which happens to or involves another person, but rather by the other person's emotional state.[63] Emotion contagion, "the tendency to 'catch' (experience/express) another person's emotions" (Hatfield et al. 1993: 96) differs from empathy in that the former is a non-conscious process, i.e. individuals are likely to be unaware of the source of their affective state (Niedenthal et

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[63] Sue's experience of sadness when she learns that her neighbor has a fatal disease can be differentiated from Sue's experience of sadness when she perceives that her neighbor is sad (because he has learned that he has a fatal disease). The latter is empathy or emotion contagion, the former is not.

al. 2006). Non-conscious social mimicry tends to be more frequent and pronounced in collectivist East Asian settings than in individualist North American ones (Van Baaren et al. 2003), suggesting the possibility of cultural variation in emotion contagion. Abu-Lughod's (1986) ethnographic study of Bedouin tribeswomen in Western Egypt suggests that empathy is elicited in Middle Eastern settings very differently than in North American contexts (see below).

Socio-cultural Influences on Allocentric Emotion in the Middle East

The particular contours of socio-cultural systems shape several facets of emotion. Tsai and her colleagues (e.g. Tsai et al. 2006, Tsai et al. 2007), for example, find that differences in the cultural valuation of behaviors that seek to influence the environment versus those which seek to adjust to the environment foster North American-East Asian differences in ideal affect, the emotions individuals prefer to experience. Several researchers have found that cultural variation in self-construal or mental models of the self affect which emotions individuals tend to feel (Kitayama et al. 2000), how individuals appraise the emotional significance of situations (Mesquita 2000), and which emotions societies tend to regard as important (Mesquita and Ellsworth 2000). It thus seems plausible to assume that the distinctive features of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system influence the frequency and intensity of allocentric emotion and the types of situations likely to elicit it.

In Middle Eastern settings a constellation of beliefs and values concerning the self and social relationships which I term *qaraba* ("closeness") is likely to organize and regulate many aspects of psychological functioning, including emotional processes. The individual is held to be inseparable from the social environment and linked to

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others through relationships of negotiable hierarchy; to be a "good" person, in the cultural sense, one must be both connected to and dominant over others.[64] *Qaraba* affects allocentric emotion in two ways. First, because Middle Easterners tend to conceive of themselves as fundamentally tied to others allocentric emotions—affective responses to events which happen to someone else—are likely to be more frequent and intense than is the case in North American contexts in which individuals tend to conceive of themselves as fundamentally autonomous. Second, the distinctive cultural imperatives of interpersonal connectedness and interpersonal dominance are likely to trigger allocentric emotions in response to those events and states involving others which affect the individual's own ability to achieve these highly valued goal states. Apart from *qaraba*, Middle Eastern religious thought and ritual, social practices and media products also tend to promote allocentric emotion.

Allocentric emotion and the Middle Eastern self-concept

Emotions, including allocentric ones, "arise in response to events which are important to the individual" (Frijda 2001: 58; Lazarus 1991). Conceptions of the "individual" differ in Middle Eastern and North American contexts, and thus allocentric emotion is likely to differ as well. Specifically, in the Middle East others in the social environment tend to be incorporated into the self-concept to a greater extent than is the case in North America. The greater self-relevance of others in Middle Eastern contexts seems likely to render allocentric emotions relatively more

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[64] The second paper in this series, "Neither East nor West: *Qaraba*, self-enhancement and conformity," offers a fuller account of Middle Eastern beliefs and values concerning the self and social relationships.

frequent and more intense: "contacts with fellow Arabs always lead to strong negative or positive feelings, never neutral feelings, towards one another" (Barakat 1993: 44).

In the Middle East the self-in-relation-to-others, as opposed to the self as discrete and bounded, is the basic unit of self-construal.[65] Middle Easterners tend to conceive of themselves "as group members rather than as independent individuals" (Barakat 1993: 24). The person is defined and understood in terms of her networks of interpersonal ties rather than her internal attributes (Eickelman 1976; Rosen 1984). Thus, one conventionally refers to adults not by their proper names, but rather as *abu*/*umm* ("father of…/mother of…"), and individuals frequently label themselves and are labeled by others with a *nisba*, i.e. a lexeme which denotes some collective identity, e.g. *al-Masri* ("the Egyptian").[66] Revealingly, a dominant metaphor for the individual in Islam, literature and popular discourse is that of a link in a chain (Khuri 1990).

The form of self-construal prevalent in Middle Eastern settings tends to foster a "familialism" which renders a wide range of others within the self environment self-relevant. The family serves as the basic social and economic unit in the Middle East and social groups tend to take the form of the family even in the absence of concrete

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[65] Middle Eastern sociologists (e.g. Barakat 1993), political scientists (e.g. UNDP 2005), anthropologists (e.g. Khuri 1990), and clinicians (e.g. Dwairy 1998) have identified the socio-centric self-concept as a core feature of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system. On explicit measures of self-construal Middle Easterners tend to be more collectivist and less individualist than European-Americans (Hofstede 1980; al-Zahrani et al. 1993; Oyserman 2002; Greenberg, n.d.).

[66] For example, the president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, is more commonly known in both formal and informal settings as Abu Mazen ("Mazen's father") and Saddam Hussein's full name included the *nisba* al-Tikriti ("man from [the village of] Tikrit"). Barakat (1993) suggests that naming conventions act to erase individual identity.

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kinship ties among their members (Dwairy 1998; Bates and Rassam 2001). Family members, observes Barakat, "remain closely locked in a web of intimate relationships that leaves limited room for independence and privacy; they continue to live in the same neighborhood, to intermarry, to group together on a kinship basis and to expect a great deal from one another" (1993: 106). Larger social aggregates such as neighborhoods, work groups, religious orders, and political parties often form through the linkage of related household or family units (Bates and Rassam 2001). Lineages groups, e.g. clans and tribes, are an important source of personal identity and serve as the locus of economic, social and political activity both in urban and rural sectors (al-Rasheed 2010; Eickelman 1998; Lindholm 2002). The genealogies defining membership in clans and tribes are often fictive, reflective of the tendency to frame and structure all relationships as familial (Rosen 2008). Individuals frequently use kinship terms in their interactions with non-kin in order to achieve the relational goals of connectedness and dominance (Khuri 1990). Within urban *hawari* (akin to a city "block") unrelated individuals behave as if the entire neighborhood constituted a single family; norms of gender segregation and female modesty, for example, are relaxed in public spaces within the *hara* just as they are in private spaces within the home (Nadim 1985). Middle Eastern political leaders routinely claim the mantle of "father" and political organizations often term themselves *usar* or "families" (Piscatori and Eickelman 2004). Generally speaking, life domains which in North American tend to involve interactions between more or less autonomous and unrelated individuals tend in Middle Eastern contexts to involve interactions between individuals who are,

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or at least consider themselves to be, family members. This seems likely to foster more frequent and intense allocentric emotion in Middle Eastern settings.

Allocentric emotion and Middle Eastern cultural imperatives

Emotions "signal culturally relevant relational opportunities and problems" (Mesquita 2007: 734). In the Middle East "relational opportunities and problems" tend to center on the cultural imperatives of interpersonal connectedness and interpersonal dominance.[67] Because events and states involving others in the social environment may affect the individual's own connectedness and dominance, allocentric emotion is likely to be both more frequent and intense and also differently patterned in the Middle Eastern than in North American socio-cultural system.

Events and states involving another person may have direct and immediate consequences for the individual's own relational goals. The major life events of self-relevant others, e.g. births, marriages and deaths, lead to the establishment or dissolution of social ties. A family member's marriage, for example, may broaden an individual's social network, and, to the extent that this furthers the goal of connectedness, is likely to elicit joy.[68] Similarly, changes in the material or social status of self-relevant others may alter hierarchical relationships. The newly married family member, for example, may no longer be sub-ordinate to the head of the household and may be superordinate to unmarried siblings who were once peers

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[67] The second paper in this series "Neither East nor West: *Qaraba*, self-enhancement and conformity" offers a more extended treatment of connectedness and dominance goals in the Middle East.

[68] Needless to say, the advancement of connectedness goals is not the only reason why an individual in a Middle Eastern setting is likely to feel joy at the marriage of a self-relevant other.

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(Bates and Rassam 2001; Eickelman 1976), thus eliciting negative emotions such as anger among those who find their own dominance goals are frustrated.

Moreover, because individuals are defined by and fundamentally tied to others, events and states involving another person tend to have indirect, but nevertheless material consequences for the individual's ability to achieve connectedness and dominance. Good or bad actions on the part of one actor are held to convey information concerning the nature of those tied to that actor, rendering the latter more or less desirable relational partners (Barakat 1993). Because individuals in this cultural context are defined by their social relationships, there is an implicit belief that individuals within a social group share each others' virtues and vices. This sensibility is evident in commonplace assertions such as "if I know who a man is, who he knows [and] who he deals with, I can tell why he does something" (cited in Rosen 1984: 50), in the importance ascribed to lineage (*silsila*) in determining authority in Sufi religious orders (Gilsenan 1982) and the Shi`ite clerical establishment (Mottahedeh 2009), and in norms of collective responsibility for the transgressions of individual group members (Bates and Rassam 2001). Similarly, in some circumstances events involving others may signal something about an actor's own dominance or capacity for dominance (Khuri 1990). Individuals share to some extent in the super-ordinate or sub-ordinate status of self-relevant others, and displays of strength or weakness by one group member may help or hurt all (Gilsenan 1996). Further, an individual is regarded by others as more or less capable of occupying a dominant role to the extent that people within the social environment exhibit or fail to exhibit deference to her (Eickelman 1976).

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Allocentric emotion, Islam, social practices and the mass media

Several features of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system apart from, though not entirely independent of, *qaraba* are likely to foster allocentric emotion. Below I describe relevant aspects of religious belief and ritual, social norms and practices, and the mass media.

Islam. Among the elements of Islamic belief and practice likely to afford allocentric emotion is the veneration of Muhammad. Muhammad is "closer to the believers than their own selves" (Quran 33:6); the relationship between Muslims and Muhammad thus "touches deep psychological and emotional chords" (Rosen 2008: 117). It is not uncommon for Middle Easterners to proclaim with considerable intensity "I love this man [Muhammad]." Well-known hagiographical episodes foster empathy and admiration: "Muslims revere and love him for all of the sacrifices he went through…he endured unimaginable hardships" (Emerick 2004: 131). The tendency for the triumphs and travails of a seventh-century religious figure to elicit powerful affective states may well generalize to other social actors.

Similarly—and more dramatically—Shi`ite reconstructions of the death of Husayn, the grandson of Muhammad killed in 680 amidst a dispute over succession to the caliphate, both afford and reflect the cultural propensity for allocentric emotion.[69] In Shi`ite communities Ashura, the day of Husayn's death, is marked by intense expressions of grief. Young men engage in public self-flagellation and self-mutilation; among other members of the community *ta`ziyah*, passion plays, elicit

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[69] This event is referenced in the epigraph of the paper.

sadness and compassion for the martyr and considerable anger towards his killer Yazd (Richard 1995).

A fourth aspect of Islam which is likely to foster allocentric emotion is Ramadan. For one month each year members of the community share in the same mental and physical states, the hardships of fasting during the day and the joys of breaking the fast at night (Eickelman 1998). The collective experience of suffering and relief seems likely to foster empathy. The ethic of "forbidding wrong" is also likely to engender allocentric emotion. It is the duty of each individual within the Muslim community to regulate the actions of others: "let there be one community of you, calling to good and commanding right and forbidding wrong" (Quran 3:104). Attention to and concern for the rectitude of others may foster anger or moral outrage (Cook 2003). Lastly, one might note that Islam reflects and promotes an interdependent or collective sense of self which may, in turn, promote allocentric emotions. Believers form a community— "this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood" (Quran 21:92)—and are to be closely tied to one another (e.g. Quran 59:9-10).

Social norms and practices. *Musayara* ("adjustment"), a form of social behavior "in which a person tends to bend to conform to the expectations of the other" in order to achieve interpersonal connectedness (Dwairy 1998: 84), fosters allocentric emotion. Individuals engaged in *musayara* may attempt to mirror or complement the emotions of self-relevant others: "solidarity with the group may require the individual to identify with other members by sharing their joys and sorrows" (Barakat 1993: 201). Sharabi (1977) suggests that *musayara* also engenders hostility to and fear of others in the social environment. Individuals repress their own preferences and emotions when

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self-relevant others are present, but express anger and resentment towards these same others through *ightiyab* (loosely "malicious gossip" or "slander") when they are absent. Moreover, since individuals engaging in *musayara* are aware of the disconnect between their outward behavior and inner thoughts and feelings, they recognize that others may be similarly insincere and experience suspicion and anxiety.

Various forms of institutionalized social gathering require and foster allocentric emotion. One of the chief ways in which individuals maintain connectedness with others is "by giving gifts, congratulations or attendance at celebrations for marriage, birthdays, graduations, funerals, religious feast days and so forth" (Eickelman 1976: 146; cf. C. Eickelman 1984; Singerman 1995). In these interactions it is often requisite for attendees to share in the emotion of the individual(s) at the center of the social gathering, e.g. the new mother or the grieving widow. Bedouin women, for example, describe mourning sessions as "crying with" another; they feel, or at least express, the same emotion as the bereaved (Abu-Lughod 1986). Abu-Lughod (1986) observes that "not only may such shared emotional experiences enhance the sense of identification that underpins social bonds, but participation in rituals that express sentiments might also generate feelings like those the person directly affected is experiencing" (69). Funerals for public figures, e.g. political leaders and "martyrs" are particularly salient in Middle Eastern settings (Piscatori and Eickelman 2004), perhaps contributing to allocentric emotion in the public sphere.

Mass media. Finally, television programming in the Middle East seems likely to promote allocentric emotion. Regular viewers of satellite news channels such as *al-Jazeera* and *al-Arabiya* are routinely exposed to remarkably graphic—at least by

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Western standards—images of the violent injury and death, typically of fellow Arabs or Muslims (Johnson and Fahmy 2010). The video-taped deaths of Muhammad al-Durah and Neda Agha-Soltan have attained an iconic status and are instantly recognizable to individuals across the region (al-Durah: Fallows 2003; Neda: Fathi 2009). [70] The habitual consumption of such images may promote emotional responding to events involving others in more prosaic spheres of life as well. One might also note that soap operas, historical dramas, and game shows are the most popular programs in the Middle East (Abu-Lughod 1993; Hammond 2007), all of which are likely to occasion the viewer's emotional involvement with characters and contestants.

Summary

   Qaraba—the constellation of beliefs and values concerning the self and social relationships prevalent in the Middle East—is likely to shape the experience of allocentric emotions. Since individuals tend to see themselves and others as fundamentally inseparable from the social environment events and states involving others tend to be self-relevant and thus emotion eliciting. The actions of others are further emotion-eliciting in that they may have both direct and indirect consequences for the individual's own ability to achieve the culturally-mandated goals of connectedness and dominance. Other features of life in Middle Eastern settings, specifically elements of Islam, social norms and practices such as *musayara*, and

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[70] Muhammad al-Durah was a 12 year old Palestinian boy shot during the course of a protest at the outset of the Second Palestinian *intifada*. Neda Agha-Soltan was a 26 year old woman shot during anti-government protests in Tehran following the 2009 presidential elections.

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recurrent exposure to graphic images of the deaths of in-group members are also likely to promote allocentric emotion.

Three Studies on Allocentric Emotion in the Middle East and North America

Allocentric emotions are affective states elicited by events or states involving some person other than the individual herself. The foregoing analysis of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system suggests that individuals in the Middle East tend to experience allocentric emotion differently than do individuals in North American settings. The conception of the self prevalent in the Middle East is likely to render allocentric emotion relatively frequent and intense. Given the familialism characteristic of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system the range of others in the social environment likely to elicit allocentric emotion is likely to be relatively broad. In Middle Eastern contexts, moreover, the antecedents of allocentric emotion which individuals experience in response to events involving others are likely to be determined by the distinctive cultural imperatives of connectedness and dominance. More formally, I hypothesize that:

H1: *Individuals in the Middle East tend to experience allocentric emotion more frequently than individuals in North America;*

H2: *Individuals in the Middle East tend to experience allocentric emotion with greater intensity than individuals in North America;*

H3: *Individuals in the Middle East and North America tend to differ with respect to the antecedent events which elicit allocentric emotion.*

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H4:   Individuals in the Middle East tend to experience allocentric emotion in response to events involving a broader spectrum of social actors than do individuals in North America.

The studies presented below offer a test of these hypotheses. Study 1 explores the experience of allocentric emotions in natural settings in the Middle East and North America. Middle Eastern and North American participants in this study provided structured descriptions of episodes in which events involving another person or group of persons elicited some emotion. Their responses allow for a comparison of the frequency, intensity and antecedents of allocentric emotion across cultures. In Study 2 participants from each culture reported their emotional responses to a sample of the episodes generated in Study 1. Study 2 provides both a further test of the claims that Middle Easterners experience allocentric emotion more frequently and intensely than do North Americans and permits exploration of cultural variation in the emotional consequences of identical antecedent events. Study 3 explores allocentric emotion in a different range of situations and settings than those described by the college student participants of Studies 1 and 2. A textual analysis of the epic Middle Eastern novels *Palace Walk* (*Bayn al-Qasrayn*, Mahfouz 1956*)* and *Cities of Salt* (*al-Tih*, Munif 1984) examines the role played by allocentric emotion in the enforcement of moral codes, in collective action and in political violence in Middle Eastern contexts. This study provides a series of insights which promise to inform future research in these domains.

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Study 1

Study 1 explores the frequency, intensity and antecedents of allocentric emotion in Middle Eastern and North American settings. The study employs a "situation-sampling" approach which has proved fruitful in past research on cultural variation in psychological functioning (Morling et al. 2002). Middle Eastern and North American participants were briefed on the concept of allocentric emotion and then used a structured format to describe as many such episodes as they were able to recall within a fixed time period. Since more frequent events are more cognitively accessible and thus easier to remember (Fiske and Taylor 1991), a cultural difference in the number of reported episodes implies a cultural difference in the frequency of allocentric emotion. The descriptions of the emotion-eliciting events provided by Middle Eastern and North American participants permitted a comparison of the antecedents of allocentric emotion and their ratings of the strength of the emotions they experienced permitted a comparison of their intensity. I anticipated that individuals in Middle Eastern settings would experience allocentric emotion more frequently and intensely than North Americans. I further anticipated that Middle Eastern participants would tend to report antecedent events involving themes of connectedness and dominance to a greater extent than would North American participants. Lastly, I anticipated that a more diverse set of others would elicit allocentric emotions among Middle Eastern participants than among North American participants.

<u>Methods</u>

Participants. Participants were 56 Middle Easterners (28 female, mean age 20.6 years) and 42 North Americans (13 female, mean age 20.4 years). North American

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participants were recruited at a private university in Northern California and received $10 for taking part in the study. Middle Eastern participants were recruited at a public university in southern Yemen.[71] Their participation was voluntary, but regional social norms and university policy prohibited them from receiving monetary compensation for doing so. Yemeni experimenters administered the study at the Middle Eastern site and a European-American experimenter administered the study at the North American site.

   Materials and procedure. On entering the lab participants received the following instructions in both written and verbal form: "Sometimes people feel emotions when something happens to another person. For example, you may feel happy when a friend does well on an exam or sad when you hear that many people died in an earthquake in another country. We would like you to describe instances when you felt an emotion because of something that happened to another person or group of people. Please try to remember as many such instances as you can and describe them on the forms provided to you." Once the researcher had verified that participants understood the task the experiment began. Each participant was provided with a stack of 20

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[71] *Yemen*. Yemen is a country of some 23 million people located on the southeastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. Quality of life in Yemen, at least as revealed by quantitative measures, is relatively low: literacy is slightly over 50%; its per capita GDP of $2500 places it 176th out of 227 nations surveyed; and life expectancy at birth is on average 63 years, 174th out of 224 nations surveyed (Central Intelligence Agency 2009). Violence—tribal, secessionist, and jihadist—is endemic, as is consumption of *qat*, a plant with narcotic properties (Caton 2005). *Study site*. The university at which this study was conducted is located in a large metropolitan area in the southern half of the country. Roughly 23,000 students are enrolled at this school. Admission is competitive and tuition is provided by the state. Study participants tended to be wealthy by Yemeni standards and were generally children of parents with relatively high-status occupations, e.g. government ministers.

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questionnaires providing a structured format for the description of allocentric emotion episodes and was instructed to use a separate questionnaire for each episode. Participants were allotted 15 minutes to complete this task. For each allocentric emotion episode participants answered 3 open-ended questions: "What happened to this person or group of people;" "To whom did this happen;" and "What emotion did you feel." The forms provided space for an answer of up to two hand-written lines for each question. Participants also answered the question "How strongly did you feel this emotion" using a scale ranging from 1 "very weakly" to 7 "very strongly." At the North American site study materials and interactions between the experimenter and participants were in English. At the Middle Eastern site study materials and interactions between the experimenter and participants were in Arabic.

Translation. The Arabic version of the questionnaire was generated by standard methods of translation and back-translation.[72] The two translators involved in this process were native Arabic-speakers fluent in English. The responses of Middle Eastern participants to the open-ended questions were translated into English by a native-Arabic speaking research assistant fluent in both languages. A second research assistant, also a native Arabic speaker fluent in English, translated a random sample of 50 episode descriptions to gauge the fidelity of the translation; there was no substantive disagreement between the two sets of translations.

Coding. I analyzed participants' responses to the open-ended questions regarding antecedents, i.e. "What happened," and targets, i.e. "To whom," in two stages. First, I

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[72] The English original was translated into Arabic and then translated back into English by a second translator and compared to the original.

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read all of the participants' answers to these questions and inductively generated five basic categories of antecedent event and four basic categories of relationship between the participant and the person or group of persons eliciting the allocentric emotion. Next, I and a Middle Eastern research assistant blind to the hypothesis used these categories to code the participants' responses. There was complete agreement in the coding of antecedent events and participant-other relationships, presumably because the participants' answers and the coding categories were relatively simple and unambiguous.

The five categories of antecedent events employed in this study were: relationship formation/dissolution; goal achievement/failure; material gain/loss; transgression of morals/norms; and physical harm. The category of relationship formation/dissolution consisted of episodes in which emotion was elicited by dating and break-ups, engagement, marriage and divorce, and separation from or re-uniting with friends or relatives. The category of goal achievement/failure consisted of episodes in which emotion was elicited by positive and negative outcomes on some task, e.g. doing well or poorly on an exam. The category of material gain/loss consisted of episodes in which emotion was elicited by the acquisition and loss of money or property and episodes involving financial hardship or prosperity. The category of transgression of morals/norms consisted of events in which emotion was elicited by the violation of some standard of behavior. The category of physical harm consisted of events in which emotion was elicited by death, illness or injury. Table 1 offers representative episodes involving each of these categories.

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The four categories of relationship between the participant and the person or group eliciting the allocentric emotion were: same family; same community; same national/ethnic group; and out-group. The category of family consisted of members of the participants' nuclear or extended family. The category of community consisted of participants' friends, fellow students or co-workers, and neighbors or residents of the same narrow geographic locale. The category of national/ethnic group consisted of persons or groups not encompassed by either of the previous two categories but with whom the participant shared a national identity, e.g. Yemeni or US, and, in the case of Middle Eastern participants, an ethnic/religious identity, i.e. Arab or Muslim.[73] The category of out-group consisted of individuals belonging to a national or ethnic group other than that of the participant.[74] Table 2 offers representative episodes involving each of these categories.

Results

Frequency. The number of episodes participants recalled during a fixed time period served as a proxy for the frequency of allocentric emotion. To determine whether there were cultural differences in the number of episodes recalled I performed a 2 (culture: Middle Eastern vs. North American) x 2 (gender: male vs. female) ANOVA. A significant main effect of culture emerged, $F(1, 94) = 29.91$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.21$. No other effects were significant. As **Figure 1** indicates, Middle Eastern

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[73] No North American participants described an emotion episode involving a comparable ethnic or religious identity.

[74] A non-trivial number of episodes described by Middle Eastern participants involved Palestinians. These were coded as "national/ethnic" on the assumption that Yemenis regarded Palestinians as fellow Arabs and/or fellow Muslims rather than as members of an out-group.

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participants recalled more episodes of allocentric emotion than did North Americans, $M = 4.36$ (SD = 1.43) vs. $M = 2.90$ (SD = .99).

Intensity.   Participants rated the strength of the emotion they experienced in response to event/states involving someone else on a scale ranging from 1 "very weakly" to 7 "very strongly." To determine whether there were cultural differences in the intensity of emotion I performed a 2 (culture: Middle Eastern vs. North American) x 2 (gender: male vs. female) ANOVA. A significant main effect of culture emerged, $F (1, 378) = 65.41$, $p < .001$, $d = .88$. No other effects were significant. As **Figure 2** indicates, Middle Eastern participants experienced emotions of greater intensity than did North Americans, $M = 6.27$ (SD = .99) vs. $M = 5.25$ (SD = 1.34).

Antecedents. For each episode, the event(s) which elicited allocentric emotions were assigned to one of five categories: relationship formation/dissolution; goal achievement/failure; material gain/loss; transgression of morals/norms; and physical harm. As **Figure 3** indicates Middle Easterners and North Americans differed in the types of events which aroused an emotional response. The percentage of emotion episodes elicited by relationship formation/dissolution was greater among Middle Eastern than among North American participants, 32.6% vs. 19.1%, $\chi^2 (1, N = 382) = 7.54$, $p < .01$, $\varphi = .14$. Middle Eastern participants also reported a higher percentage of episodes to have been elicited by physical harm than North Americans, 47.3% vs. 30.0%, $\chi^2 (1, N = 382) = 9.31$, $p < .005$, $\varphi = .16$. The percentage of episodes elicited by goal achievement/failure was lower among Middle Easterners than among North Americans, 13.4% vs. 41.7%, $\chi^2 (1, N = 382) = 42.13$, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .33$. There were no significant differences for material gain/loss or moral/norm transgression.

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Targets.   For each episode the target(s), i.e. the individuals or groups whose actions, outcomes or states elicited the allocentric emotion were assigned to one of four categories: same family; same community; same national/ethnic group; and out-group.   As **Figure 4** indicates, Middle Eastern and North American participants differed in the types of individuals and groups eliciting allocentric emotion.   The percentage of allocentric emotion episodes triggered by nuclear or extended family members was greater for Middle Eastern than for North American participants, 32.6% vs. 19.2%, $\chi^2(1, N = 382) = 5.12$, $p < .051$, $\varphi = .12$. Middle Eastern participants also reported a lower percentage of episodes to have been elicited by out-groups or members of out-groups than did North Americans, 1.95% vs. 8.23%, $\chi^2(1, N = 382) = 8.7$, $p < .005$, $\varphi = .15$.[75]

Emotions.   Participants reported the type of emotion they experienced for each episode.[76] There were several cultural differences in the types of emotion participants reported experiencing. The percentage of episodes for which fear was the reported emotion was twice as high among Middle Eastern participants as among North Americans, 12.7% vs. 6.1%, $\chi^2(1, N = 382) = 4.7$, $p < .05$, $\varphi = .11$. Pride appeared less frequently among Middle Eastern participants than among North American participants, 1.6% vs. 10.7%, $\chi^2(1, N = 382) = 16.2$, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .21$. There were no significant cultural differences for any of the other reported emotions. Although allocentric emotions were predominantly negative for both sets of participants, there

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[75] Log-linear analyses indicated an absence of significant three-way or four-way interactions, e.g. between culture, antecedent event, and emotion.

[76] The range of emotions reported by participants was broad: at least one participant in each culture group reported sadness, joy, anger, fear, disgust, alarm, excitement, surprise, relief, pride, embarrassment, guilt, contempt or envy.

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was a significant association between culture and the valence of emotion, χ^2 (1, N = 382) = 10.85, p < .005, φ = .18. Among Middle Eastern participants 78.6% of the episodes involved a negative emotion compared to 62.2% for North American participants. There was also a significant association between culture and the level of arousal or activation of the reported emotions, χ^2 (1, N = 382) = 7.9, p < .005, φ = .18. [77] Middle Eastern participants reported experiencing fewer high activation emotions, i.e. emotions associated with feelings of energy or physiological arousal, than did North Americans, 44.8% vs. 64.4%. [78]

Discussion

I had anticipated that *qaraba* would tend to promote the experience of allocentric emotion and this seems to be borne out by the findings concerning frequency and intensity. The results of this study support the hypotheses that individuals in Middle Eastern settings tend to experience allocentric emotion more frequently and intensely than do North Americans. The study offers partial support for the existence of the hypothesized differences in the antecedents of allocentric emotion. The finding that

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[77] Emotion researchers classify emotions along the dimension of arousal or activation (e.g. Tsai et al. 2006). The emotions of "calm" and "excitement," for example, are both positive, but the former is characterized by a relatively low level of physical energy or arousal, whereas the latter is characterized by a relatively high level of physical energy or arousal. A similar distinction can be made for negative emotions such as "anger" (high activation/arousal) and "depression" (low activation/arousal).

[78] There was a significant cultural difference in emotions when these were categorized along the two basic dimensions of valence (positive/negative) and activation (high activation/low activation), χ^2 (2, N = 382) = 7.99, p < .05, φ = .17. Middle Eastern participants reported experiencing: fewer high arousal positive (HAP) emotions, e.g. joy, than North Americans, 27.3% vs. 41.1%; more low arousal negative (LAN) emotions, e.g. sadness, than North Americans, 55.2% vs. 35.6%; and fewer high arousal negative (HAN) emotions, e.g. anger, than North Americans, 17.4% vs. 23.3%,.

Middle Eastern participants were more likely than North Americans to experience emotion in response to the formation and dissolution of relationships is consistent with the centrality of connectedness goals in the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system.[79] Surprisingly, however, events related to interpersonal dominance, a core cultural imperative in the Middle East, were not evident in any of the episodes described by Middle Eastern participants. The hypothesis that Middle Easterners tend to experience allocentric emotion in response to a broader range of social actors than North Americans was not supported. In fact, the results appear to suggest that the reverse is true: the allocentric emotions of Middle Easterners in this study were in some sense more parochial than those of North Americans in that they tended to be elicited by family members.

There are some marked qualitative differences in the emotion episodes described by Middle Eastern and North American participants, differences which suggest the possibility that some factor(s) other than that of culture produced the observed variation in allocentric emotion. A non-trivial number of Middle Eastern participants recalled the violent death or injury of relatives, friends and neighbors; this sort of experience was entirely absent among North American participants. [80]

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[79] The tendency for goal achievement/failure to elicit allocentric emotion among North Americans is also consistent with research on the relationship between culture and psychological functioning in that setting (e.g. Markus and Kitayama 2004).

[80] Examples include: "Some women and children were murdered and left on my street during the civil war;" "My wife was almost caught in a gun battle inside a mosque;" "My neighbor accidentally killed his friend while cleaning his gun;" "My friends were at a wedding and were hit by bullets fired by the wedding party;" "My friend's fiancée accidentally shot himself right in front of her;" "A sick person shot my cousin 10 times;" "Three of my neighbors were killed for sectarian reasons;" and "A weapons cache exploded and a missile hit the bus my aunt was riding in; now her children are

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Violence is, as noted above (footnote 15) endemic in the "failed state" of Yemen. Middle Eastern participants also described a number of events which might be attributable to the somewhat impoverished conditions which are typical in Yemen, although it should be noted that participants in the study were themselves relatively well-off. [81] One might posit that Middle Eastern-North American differences in allocentric emotion in this study were attributable to differences in the material and political environments of southern Yemen and Northern California. There are, according to this account, no cultural differences in psychological functioning in the domain of allocentric emotion. Rather, individuals in the Middle Eastern setting simply encountered a greater number of emotionally-evocative situations than those in the North American setting. It seemed necessary, therefore, to study allocentric emotion in a setting in which the life experiences of Middle Eastern and North American participants were more closely comparable and both were exposed to the same set of emotion-eliciting stimuli.

Study 2

Study 2 was designed with three objectives in mind. First, it seemed necessary not only to replicate the results of Study 1, but also to rule out the possibility that the findings of Study 1 reflected differences in participants' environments rather than differences in participants' psychological processes. To that end, both Middle Eastern

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orphaned." A small number of North American participants mentioned 9/11, the Iraq War, and events in Gaza, but none of these episodes entailed immediate personal involvement of the sort characteristic of the Middle Eastern participants.

[81] Examples include: "A ceiling fan fell and crushed the first two rows of worshippers in the mosque;" "The propane gas tank in the kitchen exploded and the house caught fire;" "My companion in the army was electrocuted." Yemenis also reported a relatively large number of traffic accidents and drownings.

and North American participants in this study were students at a private university in Northern California and I measured their responses to the same set of potentially emotion-eliciting stimuli. Second, I sought to further examine the relationship between allocentric emotion and interpersonal dominance. The absence of this theme in the episode descriptions of the Middle Eastern participants in Study 1 was surprising since ethnographic accounts (e.g. Khuri 1990) suggest that dominance tends to be a central concern for individuals in Middle Eastern settings. Lastly, Study 2 offers a preliminary exploration of cultural differences in the appraisals which generate allocentric emotion, i.e. the meanings which individuals attach to emotion-eliciting events. I anticipated that relative to North Americans, Middle Eastern participants would: report experiencing allocentric emotion more frequently and intensely; would exhibit a greater emotional response to episodes involving interpersonal dominance; and would be more likely to appraise emotion-eliciting events as having consequences for their own social standing.

Methods

Participants. Participants were 22 Middle Eastern nationals and Middle Eastern-Americans (13 female, mean age 21.7) and 22 North Americans (8 female, mean age 21.3), all students at a private university in Northern California. Middle Eastern participants responded to an email sent to members of a campus religious organization. North American participants responded to an email sent to students who had expressed a willingness to take part in social science research. All participants received a $10 gift certificate for their participation.

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Materials and procedure. Participants completed a questionnaire consisting of 10 brief vignettes describing events involving some other person, each followed by several questions concerning the participants' perceptions of and emotional response to the event. Eight of the vignettes were generated from episodes common to both Middle Eastern and North American participants in Study 1. [82] Two additional vignettes concerned themes of interpersonal dominance and deference. [83] Participants were asked to imagine these episodes happening to family members, friends, students at the same university, people of the same ethnic group and people in Latin America. After reading and imagining each vignette participants indicated the emotion they would experience in this situation and the strength of that emotion. Participants also indicated the extent to which they would feel moved to act in response to the event, the extent to which the event would affect how they feel about themselves, and the extent to which the event would affect how others feel about them. The questionnaire was administered online through Qualtrics software.

Results

Intensity and frequency. Participants rated the strength of the emotion they would feel in response to each situation on a scale from 1 "not at all" to 7 "very strongly." To determine whether there were cultural differences in the intensity of emotion I conducted a 2 (culture: Middle Eastern vs. North American) x 2 (gender: male vs.

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[82] The events episodes described in the vignettes were: the end of a romantic relationship; cheating in a romantic relationship; winning an academic award; poor performance in a job interview; theft; conflict between friends; harm caused by natural disaster; and harm caused by violence.

[83] I and a Middle Eastern research assistant judged these vignettes to have the same surface meaning to individuals in both Middle Eastern and North American settings.

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female) ANOVA. A significant main effect of culture emerged, $F (1, 40) = 6.39$, $p <$ .05, $d = .89$. No other effects were significant. As **Figure 5** indicates, Middle Eastern participants reported that they would experience emotions of greater intensity in these situations than did North Americans, $M = 4.96$ (SD = .80) vs. $M = 4.11$ (SD = 1.07). There was, however, no cultural difference in response to the two vignettes involving dominance and deference, $F (1, 40) = .43$, *ns*.

Frequency. A participant was said to have experienced an allocentric emotion if she reported a rating of greater than 1 "not at all" in response to the question "How strongly would you feel an emotion in this situation." None of the Middle Eastern participants answered "not at all" for any vignette, whereas in 5.5% of their responses North American participants did so, $\chi^2 (1, N = 440) = 12.34$, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .17$.

Self-regard. Participants rated the extent to which emotion-eliciting events would affect how they felt about themselves on a scale ranging from 1 "not at all" to 7 "a great deal." To determine whether there were cultural differences in this aspect of the appraisal of emotion-eliciting events, I conducted a 2 (culture: Middle Eastern vs. North American) vs. 2 (gender: male vs. female) ANOVA. A significant main effect of culture emerged, $F (1, 40) = 4.10$, $p = .05$, $d = .63$. No other effects were significant. As **Figure 6** indicates, Middle Eastern participants reported that emotion-eliciting events would have a greater effect on their self-regard than did North Americans, $M = 3.09$ (SD = 1.13) vs. $M = 2.42$ (SD = 1.00).

Perceptions of others. Participants rated the extent to which emotion-eliciting events would affect how others felt about them on a scale ranging from 1 "not at all" to 7 "a great deal." To determine whether there were cultural differences in this aspect

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of the appraisal of emotion-eliciting events, I conducted a 2 (culture: Middle Eastern vs. North American) vs. 2 (gender: male vs. female) ANOVA. A significant main effect of culture emerged, $F(1, 40) = 7.08$, $p < .05$, $d = .81$. No other effects were significant. As **Figure 7** indicates, Middle Eastern participants reported that emotion-eliciting events would have a greater effect on how others viewed them than did North Americans, $M = 2.72$ (SD = 1.21) vs. $M = 1.89$ (SD = .80).

Desire to act. Participants rated the extent to which they would be "feel like doing something" in response to the emotion-eliciting events on a scale ranging from 1 "not at all" to 7 "a great deal." To determine whether there were cultural differences in this aspect of emotional responding to events involving others, I conducted a 2 (culture: Middle Eastern vs. North American) vs. 2 (gender: male vs. female) ANOVA. No effects were significant.

Discrete emotions. Participants indicated what emotion they would experience in response to each vignette. Middle Eastern participants were slightly more likely to report that they would experience joy, anger, fear, sadness and surprise than North Americans, and less likely to report that they would experience disgust, but these differences did not reach the level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(5, N = 440) = 10.77$, *ns*.

Discussion

The results of this study provide additional support for the hypotheses that individuals in Middle Eastern contexts tend to experience allocentric emotion more frequently and intensely than do North Americans. The data also suggest some of the mechanisms underlying this phenomenon. Relative to North Americans, Middle

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Eastern participants tended to regard these situations as having greater consequences both for how others would perceive them and how they would perceive themselves. Thus, although none of the vignettes directly involved the participants, these episodes fostered more "ego-involvement" (Lazarus 1991) among Middle Easterners than among North Americans. My analysis of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system had suggested that events involving interpersonal dominance would be particularly likely to elicit allocentric emotion, but this conjecture was not borne out by the data. The absence of the anticipated cultural variation is in all likelihood a methodological artifact. Middle Eastern participants tend to experience vignettes consisting of brief and unelaborated descriptions of events as relatively un-engaging (Greenberg n.d.). One might speculate that had the study employed some other, more arresting means of eliciting emotion, e.g. film clips or staged events, the predicted cultural variation in emotional response might well have been observed. Clearly, additional research in this domain is warranted.

The findings of Study 2 are not, unlike those of Study 1, readily attributable to factors other than the culture. The frequency and intensity of allocentric emotion with which Middle Eastern participants in Study 1 experienced allocentric emotion might have been occasioned by the violence and poverty of Yemen. In this study, however, cultural variation in allocentric emotion was observed when participants from both culture groups were located in the same social and material environment and responded to the same set of stimuli.

<p style="text-align:center">Study 3</p>

Studies 1 and 2 suggest that individuals in Middle Eastern settings tend to experience allocentric emotion differently than do North Americans. Study 3 attempts to extend these findings by exploring the role played by allocentric emotion in the regulation of morality, collective action and political violence in the Middle East. It does so through a textual analysis of two Middle Eastern novels: Naguib Mahfouz' *Palace Walk* (*Bayn al-Qasrayn,* 1956) and Abdel-rahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* (*al-Tih*, 1984). The use of literature, as opposed to more conventional inputs such as the results of surveys and experiments, to explore allocentric emotion is warranted for two reasons. First, *Palace Walk* and *Cities of Salt* are incredibly rich sources of data. Fiction—or at least seminal works of fiction such as those considered here—have real empirical value for social psychologists in that they provide "models or simulations of the social world via abstraction, simplification and compression" (Mar and Oatley 2008: 173).[84] Emotion researchers, recognizing that "many of the greatest insights into emotions come from novelists" (Oatley et al. 2006: 14), have with some regularity availed themselves of the thick descriptions of psychological phenomena afforded by literary works, particularly in the study of different historical periods (e.g. Spackman and Parrott 2001) and cultures (e.g. Dzokoto and Adams 2007). Aside from the general utility of literature for the exploration of emotion, *Palace Walk* and *Cities of Salt* have a unique status in scholarship on the Middle East. The Arab sociologist Halim Barakat—author of one of the standard texts on the region's culture

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[84] Mahfouz received the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature, in large measure for *Palace Walk* and the other volumes of *The Cairo Trilogy* of which this novel is a part. Munif is widely regarded as one of the most important figures in Arabic literature (Theroux 1991).

and social structure—suggests that these novels describe the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system "more comprehensively and accurately than the works of all the social scientists put together" (1993: 210). Social scientific texts do, in fact, adduce passages from both works as if they were standard ethnographic accounts (e.g. al-Rasheed 2010; Gregg 2005). Second, there is a glaring lack of ethnographic data on allocentric emotion in Middle Eastern contexts, one that is only partially mitigated by the findings of Studies 1 and 2.[85] It seems quite plausible that allocentric emotion plays a non-trivial role in a variety of important social and political phenomena in the Middle East, e.g. social movements and the mobilization of the "Arab street" (Bayat 2010), the enforcement of moral codes through "honor" killings and the actions of the *mutaween* (religious police), and political violence. But the life experience of the college student participants of Studies 1 and 2 in necessarily somewhat limited in scope and does not encompass these spheres of activity (cf. Sears 1986). *Palace Walk* and *Cities of Salt*, on the other hand, provide detailed accounts of the inner lives of individuals as they encounter a wide variety of practically significant situations, ranging from anti-colonial revolt to a family member's violation of sexual mores. [86] Although

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[85] Abu-Lughod (1986), cited above, provides an extended and insightful account of "sentiments," including some facets of what might be characterized as allocentric emotion, among Bedouin in Egypt. It is unclear, however, whether her observations concerning this highly rarefied population—comparable to the "cowboy" in North America—generalize to mainstream Middle Eastern culture. Arab social scientists of the 1950s and 1960s, e.g. Hamady (1960), describe "emotionalism," i.e. emotional lability and a propensity for unduly intense expressive behavior, but the substance and method of this scholarship has been repeatedly challenged and is open to question (e.g. Moughrabi 1978; Barakat 1993).

[86] Although it was tempting to compare depictions of allocentric emotion in *Palace Walk* and *Cities of Salt* with those in novels produced in North American contexts, I opted not to do so. Given the idiosyncratic nature of literary texts and the vast

insufficient by itself, the textual analysis offered here provides some entrée into the operation of allocentric emotion in important domains and thus lays the groundwork for future research.

Methods

   Materials. Naguib Mahfouz' *Palace Walk* (*Bayn al-Qasrayn*, literally "Between Two Palaces") chronicles the lives of the members of the Jawad family, a petit bourgeois household in Cairo circa 1917-19. It is part domestic drama—a central narrative strand is the struggle between the patriarch, who demands absolute obedience from his family, and the efforts of his wife and children to realize their own goals and desires—and part historical fiction as the family's affairs unfold against the backdrop of and ultimately intersect with the British occupation and the nationalist revolt against it. Abdel-rahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* (*al-Tih*, the word can mean either "desert wasteland" or "hubris") is a thinly-veiled account of twentieth century Saudi Arabian history.[87] In the fictional country of Mooran individuals struggle to cope with, to take advantage of or to forestall the social, economic, and political dislocation occasioned by the discovery of oil. Munif describes the travails of Bedouin uprooted from their ancestral homes and forced to work in an American port facility, the efforts of local grandees and carpet-baggers to gain wealth and power, and

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differences in literary production in Middle Eastern and North American contexts (Hammond 2007), it is altogether unclear what a suitable North American comparandum for these novels would be.

[87] The events described in the novel mirror the beginnings of oil production in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia in the late 1930s, the development of a major port and the building of segregated work camps for Arab and American employees of ARAMCO at Dhahran, and the riots by Arab oil workers there in the mid-1950s (al-Rasheed 2010).

the religious and tribal backlash against the Americans and those they have co-opted. Both texts offer lengthy and detailed descriptions of the emotional states of their characters, including of their emotions.[88] The Theroux translation of *Cities of Salt* (1990) and the Hutchins translation of *Palace Walk*, both of which are regarded as superior renderings of Arabic prose into English (Classe 2000), were used for coding.

Coding. Analysis of the texts proceeded in three stages. First, I identified all of the passages in the novels involving allocentric emotion and inductively generated basic categories for antecedent events and relationships between the character experiencing and the character eliciting the emotion. A passage was classified as an allocentric emotion episode if it described a character's emotional state, e.g. "The youth flew into a *rage"* (italics mine; Mahfouz 1990: 127), and the emotion was unambiguously elicited by an event or state involving someone other than the character experiencing an emotion, e.g. "Miteb al-Hathal was embarrassed and infuriated *by Ibn Rashed's behavior*" (italics mine; Munif 1987: 32). The six categories of antecedent events employed in this study were: relationship formation/dissolution; goal achievement/failure; material gain/loss; transgression of morals/norms; physical harm; and dominance/deference. Relationship formation/dissolution, goal

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[88] A typical passage in *Palace Walk* reads: "He was sobbing with tears at the man's savage assault on his mother….These searing visions began to pursue him. He strove to flee from them, but no sooner would he escape from the clutches of one than he would be grabbed violently by another, stirring deep inside him a volcano of hatred and anger" (Mahfouz 1990: 121). A typical passage from *Cities of Salt* reads: "He sensed that something terrible was about to happen. He did not know what it was or when it would happen, and he took no comfort in the explanations offered him from all sides. The very sight of the foreigners…the instruments they carried around, the bags of sand and stones they had amassed…all these things caused Miteb's fear to grow day by day" (Munif 1987: 31).

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achievement/failure, material gain/loss, transgression of morals/norms, and physical harm encompassed the same types of eliciting events were defined for this study as they were for Study 1. The category of dominance/deference—not utilized in Study 1—consisted of episodes in which emotion was elicited by the exercise of control over others, by responses to interpersonal constraint or autonomy, and by changes in hierarchical relationships. The four categories of relationship between the participant and the person or group eliciting the allocentric emotion were: same family; same community; same national/ethnic group; and out-group—all defined for this study as they were for Study 1. Second, for each episode I and a Middle Eastern research assistant blind to the hypotheses advanced in this paper used this classification scheme to code the antecedent events and eliciting characters for all of the allocentric emotion episodes.[89] Lastly, I used the data thus generated to construct a qualitative or interpretive analysis which is reported below. The Middle Eastern research assistant reviewed my findings and did identify any areas of disagreement.

Results

Centrality of allocentric emotion. Across both novels allocentric emotion figured in a substantial proportion—slightly over 40%—of all descriptions of emotion. More importantly, allocentric emotion was a principal determinant of the behavior of characters in both novels. The dominant narrative of *Palace Walk* concerns the rage which the family patriarch expresses towards those within his household, rage almost

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[89] The research assistant was instructed to introduce new or alternative categories for antecedent events and emotion-eliciting characters if she felt it was warranted during the coding, but she did not do so.

invariably elicited by events in which he has no direct involvement.[90] The actions of the novel's other protagonists are to a significant degree attempts to avoid, attenuate or contest this allocentric anger. Allocentric emotion plays a similar role in *Cities of Salt*. Some plot elements are driven by the anger and fear which the alien mores of the American oil workers elicit within individuals whose own lives are largely untouched by the advent of the Americans. Others hinge on the grief and rage individuals experience in response to the injustice experienced by others within their community.[91]

   Allocentric emotion and cultural imperatives. In both novels events involving others elicit allocentric emotion when they are perceived to affect a character's own ability to achieve the cultural imperatives of connectedness and dominance. In *Palace Walk* an adult son's anger at his mother's sexual liaisons is prompted by his concern that her actions will prevent him from contracting a good marriage. Similarly, much of the patriarch's anger towards members of his household is driven by the belief that their actions will cause others in the community to view him as a less dominant figure. In *Cities of Salt* the submissiveness of local elites in their dealings with the Americans elicits anger among community members who feel that such actions render them

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[90] Much of the action of the novel centers on the patriarch's angry response to: his wife's visit to a religious shrine; his adult son's marital woes; another adult son's involvement in the nationalist movement; and the engagement and marriage of his two daughters.

[91] Much of the action of the novel centers on the affective response of members of the community to: the Americans' transgression of sexual mores, e.g. the presence of female sunbathers in the American camp; the oil company's treatment of the kinsmen of an oil worker who died in a job-related accident; and the murder of a local gadfly.

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subordinate to the Americans as well.[92] Conversely, the payment of blood money to one member of the community elicits joy on the part of others, for the deference extended to one member of the community is felt to elevate the status of all.

   Allocentric emotion and the moral domain. Across both novels the violation, real or imagined, of moral codes was the most frequent antecedent of allocentric emotion. Characters in *Palace Walk* tended to focus on adherence to traditional standards of sexual propriety.[93] The moral concerns of the protagonists of *Cities of Salt* were somewhat broader than those of the characters of *Palace Walk*. Moral outrage was occasioned by the introduction of new technologies, by failure to behave in accordance with the dictates of the Bedouin "honor" system, and by the contravention of hospitality norms. And, as in *Palace Walk*, the sexual impropriety of others elicited strong emotions. [94] In both novels allocentric anger is depicted not only as a spontaneous response to moral transgressions, but also a means of establishing and maintaining the desired moral order. Thus in *Palace Walk* the patriarch enforces the adherence of his wife, children and extended family to his ethical regime through

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[92] The need of the Arab oil-workers to occupy a dominant role vis-à-vis their American counterparts leads the former to feel outrage at the Americans' superior living quarters and happiness at the Americans' difficulties in coping with the heat and Arabic.

[93] Allocentric emotion, chiefly anger, was elicited by violations of the prohibition on female interaction with un-related males and by sexual activity outside of marriage regardless of the gender of the actor. Sexual relationships between Egyptian women and British soldiers also generated anger and contempt.

[94] Allocentric emotion was elicited by: the use of the telescope, the radio and the telephone (in the Wahabi tradition new technologies are sometimes considered to be *bid`a* or "innovation" proscribed by Islam); by the failure of the American company and the local emir to either feud with or pay "blood money" to the relatives of a worker who died in a job-related incident; and by the Americans' relatively unconstrained sexual behavior.

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frequent and intense emotional outbursts.[95] Opponents of the Americans and their supporters in *Cities of Salt* express their moral outrage in a deliberately public manner so as to mobilize others who may be in sympathy with their views and to compel those who are not to comply with traditional standards of behavior.[96]

    Allocentric emotion and the political domain. In both novels allocentric emotion plays a substantive role in the political sphere. The protagonists of both *Cities of Salt* and *Palace Walk* experience fear and anxiety in response to political events in which they have no direct involvement and which they recognize are likely to have little if any material consequences for their own lives.[97] Allocentric emotion is also depicted as a crucial driver of collective action. In *Cities of Salt* powerful feelings of grief and anger elicited by the deaths of community members precipitate a riot. In *Palace Walk* emotional responses to nationalist leaders and low-level activists, primarily empathy and admiration, appear to motivate participation in anti-British demonstrations. Somewhat over 10% of allocentric emotion episodes in these novels were elicited by members of out-groups, the British in *Palace Walk* and the Americans in *Cities of Salt*. The anger elicited by perceived moral transgressions by out-groups was, as adumbrated above, an important element in collective action against these

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[95] Interestingly, female members of the patriarch's household generally modify their behavior to conform to the patriarch's code of conduct; male members of the household exert greater efforts to avoid detection.

[96] The local religious leader, for example, expresses his anger towards the emir at a feast and towards a member of the local elite while the latter is entertaining American guests, both uncharacteristically confrontational actions in a Middle Eastern context.

[97] In *Cities of Salt* disputes within the local elite precipitated by the discovery of oil elicit anxiety among members of the community. In *Palace Walk* the protagonists experience generalized feelings of worry and fear as they contemplate the rise of the nationalist movement.

groups.[98] A sense of relative deprivation fostered anger towards the American oil-workers in *Cities of Salt* and precipitated a riot.[99]

Discussion

To the extent that *Palace Walk* and *Cities of Salt* are credited by Middle Eastern observers with possessing a considerable degree of verisimilitude, the centrality of allocentric emotion in these novels lends additional credence to the findings of Studies 1 and 2. In both texts, but not in Studies 1 and 2, allocentric emotions arose in response to events affecting the individual's ability to achieve interpersonal dominance, suggesting the need for additional research in this area.

In both *Palace Walk* and *Cities of Salt* others' violations of ethical standards tend to elicit a powerful emotional response. One might posit that allocentric emotion of this sort plays a non-trivial role in the harsh punishments sometimes meted out in Middle Eastern settings for sexual impropriety, e.g. the "honor killings" which so often baffle Western observers (e.g. Lacey 1981). Sexual transgression by one group member implies that other group members may be similarly lacking in sexual restraint; their ability to form advantageous social ties through marriage may be compromised. Super-ordinate members of the group such as the parents and older siblings of the transgressor may also be seen as "weak;" individuals who cannot secure deference within their own household are not competent to exert authority outside of it. The

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[98] In Palace Walk anger at displays of friendship towards British soldiers precipitate a near-lynching; in Cities of Salt opposition to the Americans has its roots in the anger at the perceived sexual license of the Americans and the failure of the oil company to pay blood money to a dead worker's relatives.

[99] Conversely, the protagonists of the novel experienced joy at the difficulties the American oil workers encountered in coping with the harsh physical environment.

frustration of connectedness and dominance goals may elicit considerable anger. The intensity of the response to cartoon depictions of Muhammad circa 2005 might also be seen in this light.

It is also to be noted that in both novels departures from the status quo in the political sphere precipitated considerable anxiety among individuals whose own lives were more or less unaffected by these events. This is of interest because it is frequently suggested that the prevalence and longevity of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East are the result of a culturally-grounded fear of *fitna* ("civil strife" or "disorder"). Middle Easterners, according to this account, are willing to tolerate any sort of government, no matter how despotic, so long as *fitna* can be avoided (Lewis 1973). The truth of this claim is beyond the scope of this article, but the emotions described in *Palace Walk* and *Cities of Salt* are broadly consistent with this notion.

General Discussion

The research presented here explored cultural variation in allocentric emotion, i.e. affective states elicited by events or states involving some person other than the individual herself. Two studies support the hypotheses that individuals in Middle Eastern contexts tend to experience allocentric emotion more frequently and more intensely than do North Americans, and in response to different antecedent events and actors in the social environment. In Study 1 Middle Eastern participants recalled more allocentric emotion episodes than did North Americans and rated the intensity of their emotional experience as higher. They were more likely than North Americans to experience allocentric emotion as the result of the formation or dissolution of social relationships and to experience allocentric emotion in response to an event involving a

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family member. Study 2 replicated the findings on the frequency and intensity of allocentric emotion. Responding to the same set of stimuli Middle Eastern participants reported experiencing emotions more frequently than did North Americans and reported experiencing these emotions more strongly. In this study Middle Eastern participants perceived the emotion-eliciting episodes to have greater consequences for how they would regard themselves and how others would regard them than did North Americans, suggesting a possible mechanism underlying the observed cultural variation in allocentric emotions. Study 3 extended the findings of Studies 1 and 2 by exploring the role played by allocentric emotion in the regulation of morality and political activity in Middle Eastern contexts. An interpretive analysis of two seminal Middle Eastern literary works regarded as having great verisimilitude revealed allocentric emotion to be an important element in the response to perceived violations of moral codes, in collective action and in relationships with out-group.

The tendency of individuals in Middle Eastern contexts to experience allocentric emotion differently than individuals in North American settings is likely to be the outcome of the formers' engagement with core elements of the Middle Eastern socio-cultural system. *Qaraba*, a constellation of beliefs and values concerning the self and social relationships, tends to render the events and states of others in the social environment self-relevant and thus emotion-eliciting. Features of everyday life in this cultural context, including Islam, routine forms of social interaction and the mass media are also likely to foster allocentric emotion.

Future research

Although there has been considerable research on various forms of allocentric emotion in Western settings, few studies have examined this aspect of psychological functioning in non-Western settings, and none at all—so far as I am aware—in the Middle East. The studies presented here are, of course, but a first step in the exploration of a complex and perhaps practically important set of social psychological phenomena. It is clearly requisite to go beyond the situation-sampling and vignette methods employed here and to study cultural variation in allocentric emotion as it occurs "online," i.e. at the time and in the settings in which it actually happens. Of additional interest are facets of allocentric emotion only minimally addressed in the research presented here. One area of interest is cultural variation in the tendency for individuals to act on the basis of allocentric emotion.[100] Are, for example, individuals in Middle Eastern contexts more likely than those in North American contexts to do something to alleviate the suffering of someone whose travails have elicited allocentric sadness? A second of interest is cultural variation in emotion contagion, i.e. the more or less non-conscious mimicry of the emotions of others in the social environment. One might anticipate that *qaraba* and the attendant cultural practice of *musayara* ("adaptation") would tend to foster greater emotion contagion in Middle Eastern than in North American settings. This, in turn, might shed light on the dynamics of collective action in Middle Eastern contexts.

Practical applications

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[100] In Study 2 Middle Eastern and North American participants did not differ in their response to the question "To what extent would this episode make want to do something."

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Among the elements of the "Orientalist" construction of the Middle Easterner was his excessive—and thoroughly alien—emotionalism (e.g. Patai 1976). Although scholars have long since discarded this notion (e.g. Moughrabi 1978; Barakat 1993), many Westerners struggle to fathom the emotions of individuals in Middle Eastern contexts, e.g. the intensity of the anger expressed in response to cartoon depictions of Muhammad. Some apprehension on the part of North Americans of the existence and causes of cultural variation in allocentric emotion may lead to greater understanding and less "demonization" of Middle Easterners.

Lastly, one might return to the observations with which this article began, namely the mechanisms through which individuals come to actively participate in and passively support jihadist groups. Jihadist propaganda tends to appeal to the allocentric emotions of potential recruits. It seeks to evoke powerful feelings of moral outrage against those who have harmed the innocent and admiration for those who are acting to redress these wrongs. In addition to—or perhaps instead of—challenging the doctrinal and ideological positions of jihadist groups (McCants et al. 2006) and seeking to undercut the cache individuals attach to membership in these organizations (Kenning n.d), US efforts to reduce terrorist activity in Middle Eastern contexts might do well to devote similar attention to allocentric emotion.

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"What happened…"	**Antecedent category**
"took two wives"	relationship formation/dissolution
"failed at his studies abroad"	goal achievement/failure
"stole cookies from a street vendor"	moral/norm transgression
"sold company for $11 million"	material gain/loss
"infected with malaria"	physical harm

Table 9. Study 1: categories for the coding of antecedent events.

"To whom did it happen"	**Participant-target relationship**
"my cousin"	same family
"the local soccer team"	same community
"9 year old Yemeni child"	same national/ethnic group
"victims of Haiti earthquake"	out-group

Table 10. Study 1: categories for the coding of emotion-eliciting individuals and groups.
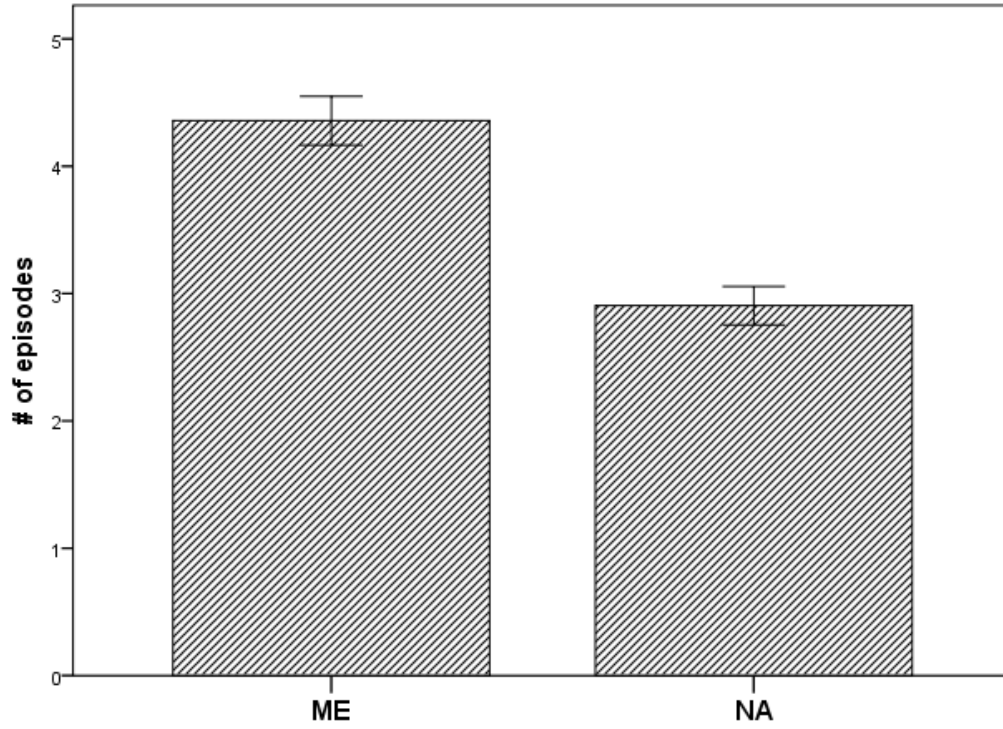
Figure 11. Study 1, frequency of allocentric emotion: Middle East vs. North America
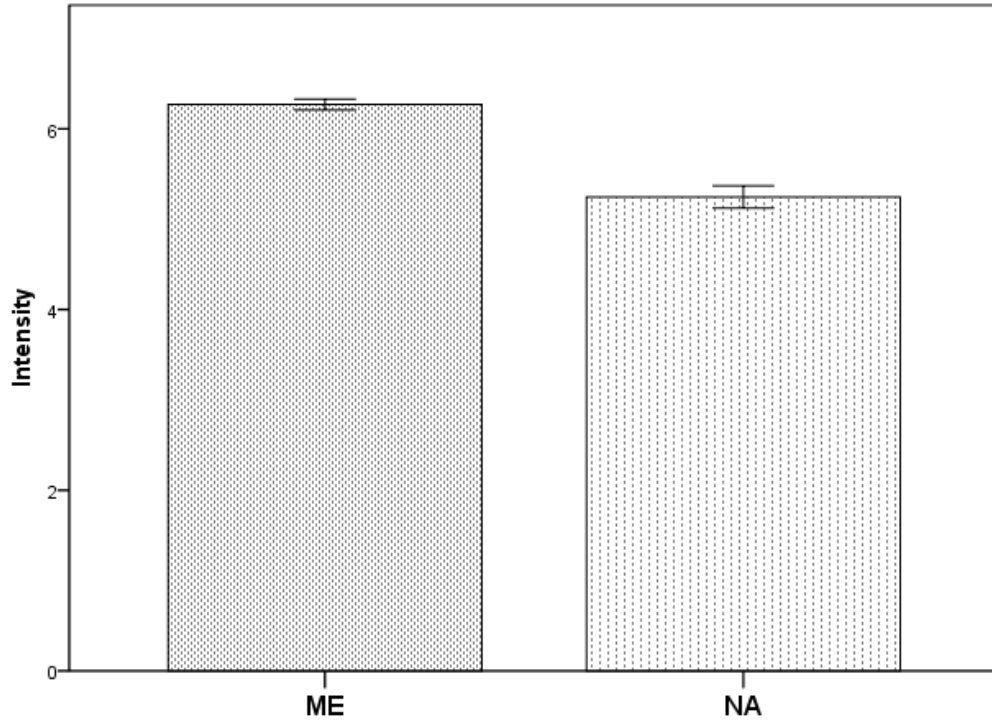
Figure 12. Study 1, intensity of allocentric emotion: Middle East vs. North America.
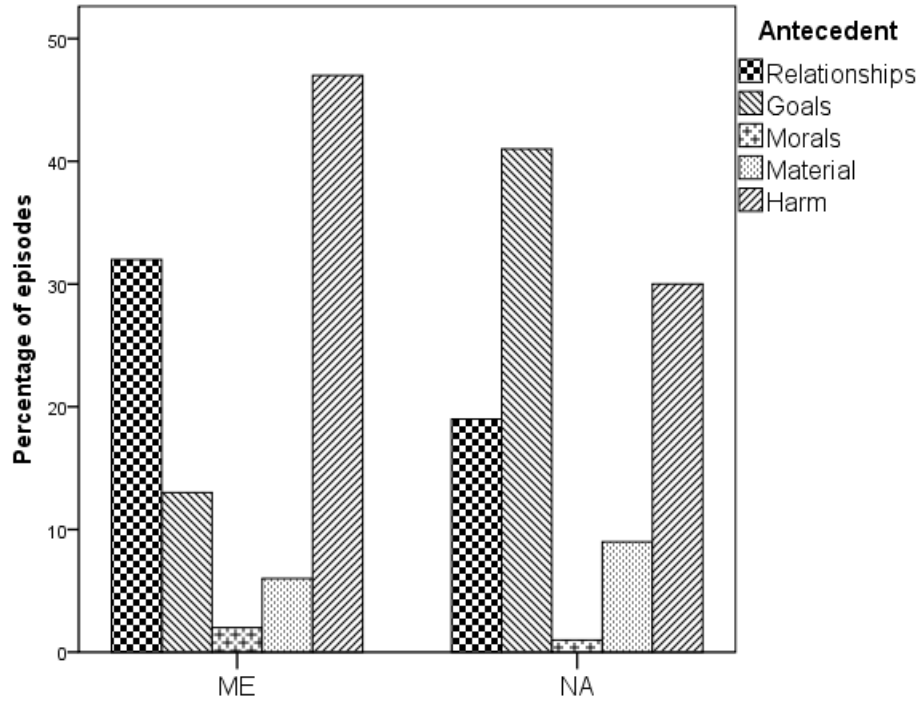Emotional intensity scale ranges from 0 "very weak" to 7 "very strong."

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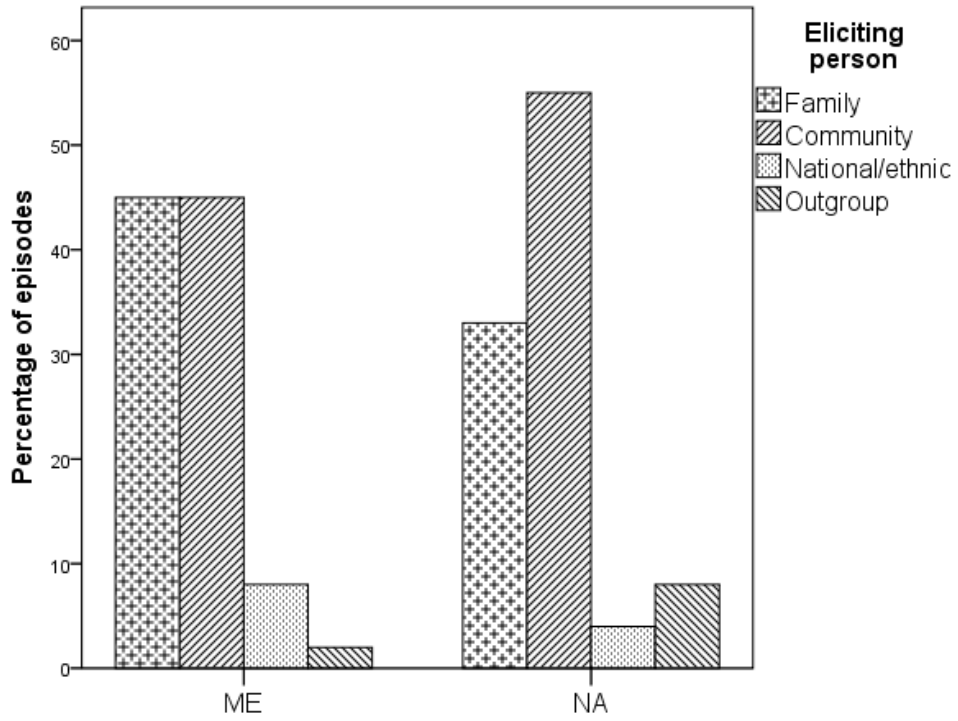Figure 13. Study 1, antecedents of allocentric emotion: Middle East vs. North America

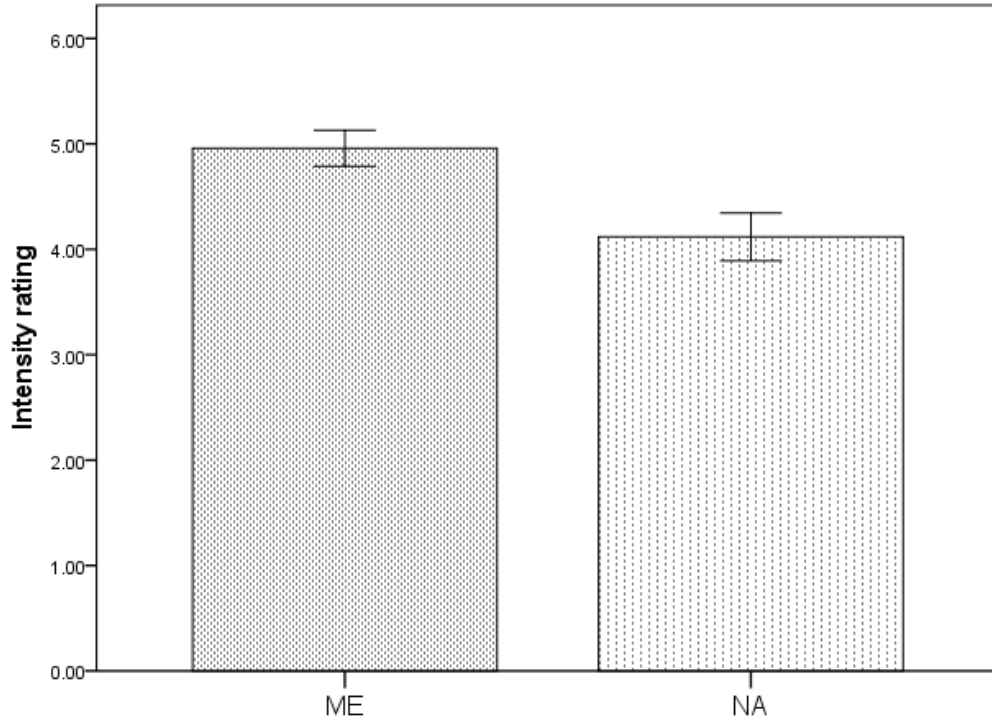Figure 14. Study 1, targets of allocentric emotion: Middle East vs. North America

Figure 15. Study 2, intensity of allocentric emotion: Middle East vs. North America.
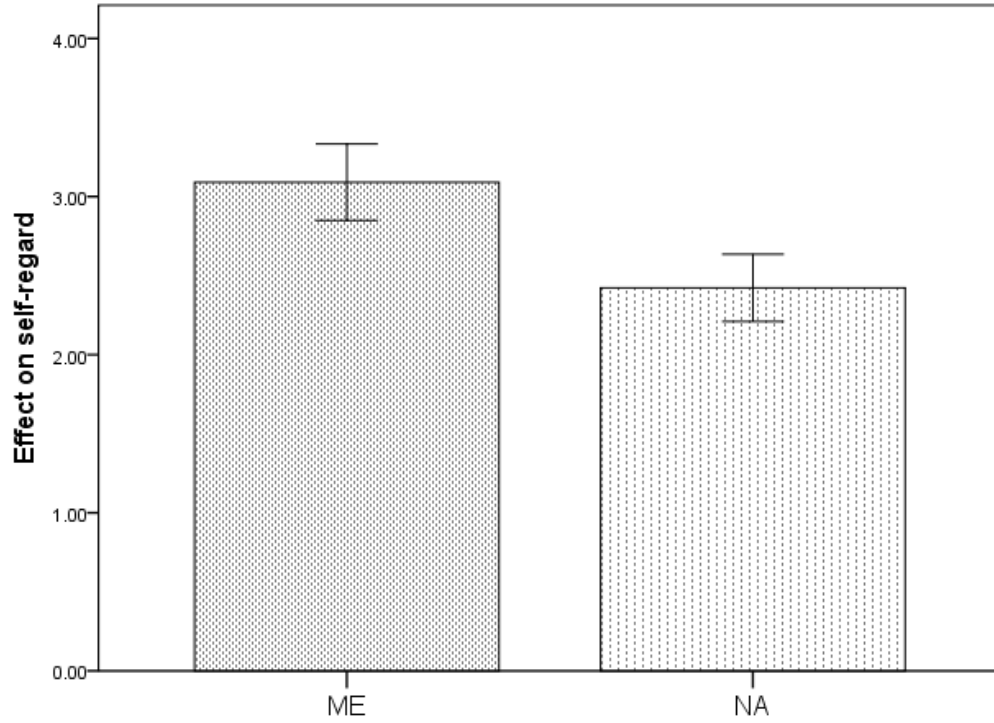Emotional intensity scale ranges from 0 "very weak" to 7 "very strong."

Figure 16. Study 2, consequences for self-regard: Middle East vs. North America. Scale ranges from 0 "would not affect how I felt about myself at all" to 7 "would affect how I felt about myself a great deal."
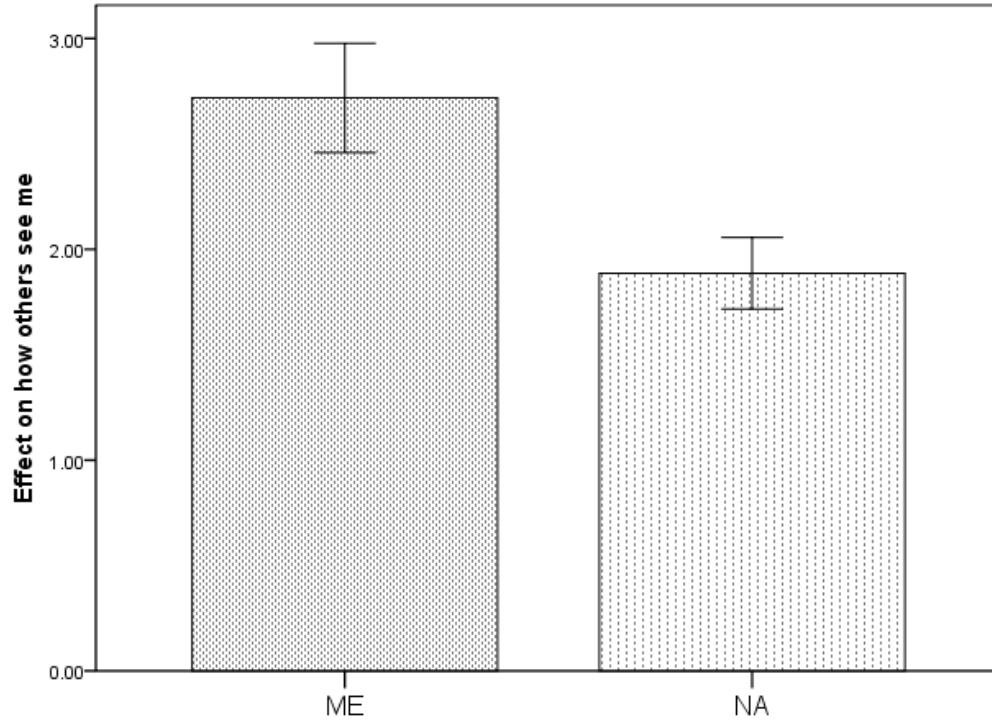
Figure 17. Study 2, effects on regard by others: Middle East vs. North America. Scale ranges from 0 "would not affect how others regard me at all" to 7 "would affect how others regard me a great deal."

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