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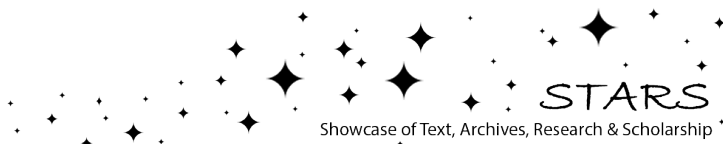Timothy A. Duvall Brown
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MULTIPLE MINORITY IDENTITIES:
QUEER AND MUSLIM ARAB AMERICANS

by

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ABSTRACT

People who are Queer Muslim Arab Americans have unique experiences, as their multiple identities often clash head-on with cultural expectations of their respective communities. To fully grasp the concept of someone who identifies as such, this thesis explores each minority identity individually, and then examines the interactions of all three identities. The *Double Jeopardy* and *Intersectional Invisibility* theories of multiple minority identities are explored in relation to people who are Queer Muslim Arab Americans. Scenarios are outlined in which each theory seems more relevant. Finally, community needs of Queer Muslim Arab Americans are discussed, with a focus on the opportunities that are available to mental health providers and community psychologists to make a positive impact on this multiple minority community

DEDICATION

To Issa. Your continued perseverance, optimism, and candor are truly a joy. You inspire all of those with whom you surround yourself to challenge truths, examine injustices, and create new realities. *Bahibek*, and thank you for opening my eyes.

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INTRODUCTION

The United States of America has been recognized as a melting pot of cultures, races, religions, and traditions. With this diversity comes a myriad of intersections of peoples' multiple identities. Among these are several minority identities. A person can identify as a racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, or gender minority. The oppression experienced due to one's minority identity can create an environment in which it is extremely difficult to navigate one's true self. The idea of the American "melting pot" is often challenged, when these diverse populations do not coexist peacefully. A person with multiple minority identities may find that these identities clash with one another, and the compounding effect can be extremely difficult for a person or community to handle. Among other things, this can cause distress in an individual, creating unique opportunities for psychologists, mental health providers, researchers, and educators to provide for these population-specific concerns.

People who are Queer Muslim Arab Americans have unique experiences, as their multiple minority identities often clash head-on with cultural expectations of their respective communities. To fully grasp the concept of someone who identifies as such, we must examine each identity individually, then explore how the interaction of all three identities can influence a person's experiences. Specifically, the potential prejudice and discrimination faced by this group will be examined, followed by how the community can best address their needs.

CHAPTER ONE: ARAB AMERICAN IDENTITY

Arab Americans are a growing group of ethnic minorities in the United States.

They are people who have immigrated to the United States from, or have ancestral

connections to, approximately 20 different Middle Eastern and African countries (Lee,

2006). This chapter will explore the fundamental components of an Arab American

identity, including a brief history of Arab immigration, current classification of Arab

Americans, social norms including family structure, the socialization of children,

marriage, the role of religion in their everyday lives, gender roles within the community,

and friendships.

History

The United States has had three major waves of Arab immigration since the 1800s

(Lee, 2006). The first group, motivated by financial opportunities, came to the US

between 1800 and World War I. The majority of these immigrants came from Syria and

Lebanon, and settled in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Boston, and parts of the Midwest. The

majority of this population was Christian, making it easy for them to blend in with the

dominant religious culture in the US. In 1948, after the official creation of Israel, a

number of professionals and university students, including many refugees from Palestine,

immigrated to Chicago, Toledo, Dearborn, and Detroit. This second group of immigrants

was comprised of more Muslims, who clung to their Arab identities more closely than

their predecessors. The Arab-Israeli war of 1967 was a major impetus for the third wave

of immigrants, who are still immigrating today in hopes of escaping war and political

instability. This third group of immigrants is the most geographically diverse group, settling all over the United States. Unfortunately, this group has received a more negative reaction to their immigration, and has therefore encountered more difficulty when assimilating in the US culture.

Classification

When examining specific populations, it is important to understand the methods by which the government, academia, and other entities conducting research categorize and classify these groups. These categorizations and classifications exist for many reasons, including social service delivery, statistical research, and curriculum development. In both academia and governmental politics, the concept of racial classification has heavily influenced "official attitudes" (Suleiman, 1999, p. 210) of immigrants in the United States. Currently, most ethnic classification systems categorize Arab Americans as *white*. With such a classification, Arab Americans' ethnic minority status is often overlooked. Recently, a need for clarification, accommodation, and reexamination has arisen with respect to Arab Americans' relationship with ethnic classification. They remain at "an interesting social crossroads, where issues of minority and majority affiliation demand more attention and reflection" (p. 209). Progress has been seen in civic, educational, and social structures, along with the Department of Commerce's census advisory board, where Arab Americans have been recognized and categorized as an ethnic minority (Suleiman, 1999).

Social Experiences

As one of the most diverse ethnic groups in the US, Arab Americans come from a multitude of different cultural, linguistic, political, religious, and familial backgrounds (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001). Despite these diverse backgrounds, Arab Americans have many cultural patterns in common, which should be examined in order to better understand their identities. According to Nydell (2006), Arabs perceive themselves to be generous, humanitarian, polite, and loyal. They are passionate about the richness of their cultural heritage, and their contributions to religion, philosophy, literature, medicine, architecture, art, math, and the natural sciences. Dignity, honor, and respect are the most valued characteristics, and it is believed that nothing should stand in the way of protecting them. Arab Americans should always make a good impression on others, so as not to damage their reputation. In the Arab world, reality is accepted subjectively. "If [Arabs] feel that something threatens their personal dignity, they may be obliged to deny it, even in the face of facts to the contrary" (Nydell, 1996, p. 41). Americans can perceive this as immaturity, because they are conditioned to believe that objectivity is the most efficient method of approaching life. Arabs are part of a definitive cultural group who are part of *al-umma al-'arabiyya,* or the Arab Nation (Nydell, 1996).

There are a number of social norms that are applicable to Arab American culture. For example, good manners and hospitality are highly valued as a method of accurately assessing a person's character (Nydell, 1996). If one eagerly and willingly accepts guests into their home, they are seen as a person of high class. The general outlook on social life in Arab culture is more laid back and less time oriented than American culture. According to Nydell (1996), plans for social gatherings and events should always be

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flexible, as they are likely to change unexpectedly. A commonly used Arabic phrase, *Ma'alish,* meaning "it's not that serious" or "never mind" is often exchanged when plans are changed or cancelled. Although very common in Arab culture, this could cause a problem for Arab Americans who have to try to integrate the relaxed nature of their home culture with the fast paced culture in the United States (Nydell, 1999). Verbal assertiveness and the use of gestures are important in communicating (Lee, 2006), and emotional expression is highly valued. As a result, Arab Americans may be perceived as too emotional by westerners, whereas westerners may find that people of Arab descent find them to be too cold (Nydell, 1996).

Religion

An integral part of Arab American identity is religion. When immigrating to America, Arab Christians and Muslims brought with them strong religious identities and the will to continue their faith in the new country (Schur, 2005). According to Nydell (1996), being religious is essential for all Arab people. Atheism and agnosticism are not welcomed in Arab society; everyone believes in God and has a religious affiliation. Liberal interpretations of religion also have no place in Arab society, as they are not perceived as the way that God intended religion to be followed. Critical remarks about other religions are not tolerated, because all religions in the Arab world should be treated with respect. It is also believed that humans cannot control all events, and that piety is a top priority (Nydell, 1996).

During a study conducted by Ajrouch (1999, as cited in Suleiman, 1999) participants who were asked to talk about their identities as Arab Americans

automatically began discussing the religious aspects of their lives. This shows that religion is tightly knit with all other facets of an Arab American ethnic identity. According to Nydell (1996), religion is practiced "almost obtrusively" and affects the way of life each day. In the Islamic world, no separation of church and state exists. This extreme difference with the United States, where a very clear separation of church and state exists, could cause significant stress and confusion for Arab Americans who are accustomed to Islamic government. In the United States, many Arab Americans see religion as a way to cope with the stress of living in a new country that has very different religious ideals (Suleiman, 1999). As a result, some religious practices may be more common in the United States than in an Arab American's country of origin. One benefit to the continuation of these traditions is that certain social rules that might otherwise disappear are upheld (Suleiman, 1999).

Family

The structure of the Arab family is central to the concept of an Arab American identity. Integrating the social norms of traditional Arab families with the norms of families in the United States is a difficult dynamic with which Arab Americans must cope. Because family is the most significant aspect of an Arab American identity (Lee, 2006), it is sometimes impossible for this group to deviate from this structure. Of utmost importance is loyalty and dedication to the family. This takes precedence over personal needs, friends, and careers (Nydell, 1996). Arab parents welcome the dependence of their children, and often welcome them and their families to live in their homes. In keeping such a close-knit family, ethnic identities are passed down from generation to generation (Suleiman, 1999). Thus, older generations are somewhat able to control the behavior of

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their children and future generations. It is believed that if the traditional family ties are weakened, Arab culture will suffer (Nydell, 1996). By that token, developing an individual identity independent of the family is rarely valued. Arab American families rely on each other during times of illness and crisis, and will often become distraught if the family is not present in times of need (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001). Status of and within the Arab family is also very important. The structure of Arab families is patrilineal in nature, meaning "individuals [are] entitled to certain rights through [their] father, and automatically [belong] to a group defined through the father" (Suleiman, 1999, p. 130). Arab children receive love and emotional support from the mother, whereas the father is the source of discipline and authority. The father instills awe and fear in his children and other family members so that no one deviates from cultural traditions. It is a responsibility for Arabs to conform to their traditional social standards, thereby maintaining the family's reputation and honor. Nydell (1996) says that the pressure of maintaining this honor is the greatest source of pressure in the life of an Arab American.

There is a large focus on the socialization of children in Arab American homes. They are taught that conformity and acceptable social images are very important to the wellbeing of the family. Their behaviors in society are considered a direct reflection on their parents and the family name (Nydell, 1996). This serves as a major motivation for children to modify their behaviors and act as respectful Arab Americans. Throughout their upbringing, Arab children experience two unique patterns of socialization. The first is that the concept of shame is instilled in lieu of guilt. Secondly, "self-criticism is not cultivated...instead a reflex to social pressure and criticism is developed" (Nydell, 1996 p. 94). These concepts could have an effect on the overall self-awareness of Arab

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American children, because, instead of focusing on themselves, they are taught to focus on how they are perceived by others. Many Arab parents are not actively involved in their children's school activities which, when paired with peer pressure, could greatly decrease the parents' influence in their children's lives (Lee, 2006).

Marriage

Another important concept of critical importance is the role of marriage in Arab American culture. Normally, Arab marriages are family-arranged and are seen as an act of respect to the family (Nydell, 1996). When choosing partners, each family takes into very serious consideration the community reputation of one another (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001). Idealism and romanticism rarely factor into the selection of a partner. Financial security, social status, and the creation of a family take precedence over companionship and love (Nydell, 1996). In the United States, such marriages are not common, mostly because Americans' expectations are very different from those of Arabs. It is important to note that Arabs' expectations lead to fewer disappointments and lower divorce rates. Interfaith marriages are looked down upon in Arab culture, whereas interracial and interethnic marriages within the same religion are more acceptable (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001).

The structure of Arab marriages further fortifies the bonds of family. Because partners are not a significant source of social and emotional support, members of the family become very codependent (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001). This relationship is usually beneficial for Arab Americans, as they can rely on a number of people for financial resources and security and a support network when faced with psychological

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problems. However, recent Arab American refugees face increased stress and vulnerability as a result of their families being broken apart by war. The support to which they are accustomed may not exist at all once in the United States, forcing them to seek help from outside sources. This can cause significant internal conflict for Arab Americans, as "outsiders" are generally not trusted in Arab culture (Lee, 2006).

Gender Roles

Very significant to the structure of an Arab American identity is the fact that Arab ethnicity is, by nature, an extremely gendered construct. Men and women have defining characteristics (Suleiman, 1999) from which they rarely deviate. Arab men and women should never be alone together, for fear of bringing a bad image to their family name. For this reason, many Arabs prefer social separation, as it makes them feel more comfortable (Nydell, 1996). The very nature of this custom is extremely incompatible with American culture, because of the extent of integration of genders.

By way of gender roles, Arab American men become more socialized in the US, whereas women are "protected" by anti-assimilation pressures that govern their behavior inside and outside the home. The majority of Arab American families develop their blended identities by taking advantage of these gender differences. The sons and males of the family provide "the American Dream," while the daughters and females of the family follow strict cultural practices that maintain the ethnic aspects of the identity. Whereas many Americans see restricted female behavior as oppressive, Arab women believe themselves to have a strong sense of solidarity (Suleiman, 1999).

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Most current research focuses on the behaviors of females as the defining

characteristics of gender roles in Arab societies. Arab American adolescents in a focus

group (Suleiman, 1999) interpreted the differences between Arab identity and American

identity through social norms for females. This shows that the primary focus in

identifying gender roles, both inside and outside Arab communities, is the acceptable

behavior of women. Nydell (1996) says that a violation of appropriate behavior by

women is seen as more destructive than by a man, thus creating the significant focus on

females. In Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula, it is uncommon for women to work

outside of the home. Women's power in the home is usually related to household

budgets, socialization and education of children, and the arrangement of marriages

(Nydell, 1996). Young Arab females are held to very strict standards of behavior,

especially in relation to their interactions with males. The normative dating scene for

most young Americans is seen as a threat to Arab American girls. The prospect of Arab

girls spending time with, dating, or having an intimate relationship with someone before

marriage would taint, and bring great shame to, the family name. This causes Arab

parents to pay more attention to, and have more control over, their young daughters. In

environments of perceived threat, restrictions on Arab women's behavior become

stronger, as a means of protection (Suleiman, 1999). The only males with whom Arab

women are permitted to interact are close relatives. The same behaviors are not expected

of "western women" with whom Arab Americans interact (Nydell, 1996), posing an

interesting dichotomy for Arab American women.

Male behavior is given much less attention, and allows for significantly greater

freedom, as it is under much less scrutiny. Arab males take the dominant role in

relationships and families, heading up the household (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001) and regulating the behavior of their sisters and female relatives. This is in response to a perceived responsibility to uphold the honor of the Arab family, and an expectation that they are decisive and aggressive. Often, Arab men become very upset and take action if they find out that women to whom they are related act out of the prescribed gender boundaries (Suleiman, 1999).

Friendship

The view of friendship within Arab culture is also important to understand. Nydell (1996) says that the duty of a friend is to help and give as much as he or she can to the friendship. All acquaintances are potential friends, but most Arab Americans prefer other Arab Americans because of their shared boundaries and values (Suleiman, 1999). Some Arabs have a very difficult time trusting that westerners can be loyal friends, and thus do not interact with, or take a significant amount of time to build trust with, people outside of their ethnic groups (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001). Building such trust is crucial for Arab Americans and Americans alike, as a good personal relationship is the "most important single factor" (Nydell, 1996, p. 31) in successful business collaboration with Arabs.

CHAPTER TWO: MUSLIM AMERICAN IDENTITY

Muslims, the followers of the religion of Islam, are becoming a significantly predominant religious group in the United States. Despite this growth, Muslim Americans remain a religious minority amongst the numerous Christian Americans in this country. A brief history of Islamic communities, the classification of Muslims, and social experiences of Muslim Americans are explored in this chapter to help form a clearer picture of a Muslim American identity.

History

Between six and eight million people in the US are Muslim, coming from a number of different countries. Immigrant Arabs, South Asians, Middle Eastern non-Arabs, and East Asians; and nonimmigrant African American, Caucasian, and Native Americans make up what is expected to become the second largest religious group in the US by the year 2010. More than one-third of the US Muslim population lives in metropolitan areas in the Northeast and East Coast, and in California and Chicago. One of the largest Muslim communities is in Dearborn, Michigan (Ali, Liu & Humedian, 2004).

Beginning in the 1800s, Muslim immigrants from the Middle East and Eastern Europe began to establish a presence in the United States. This immigration occurred in waves, beginning in 1875. Muslims in this time period came to the US from Syria and Lebanon, and were mostly uneducated men. The second wave occurred between 1918 and 1922, following WWI. The majority of these immigrants were friends and relatives

of previous immigrants. Between 1930 and 1938, the third wave of immigrants was restricted to relatives of immigrants who had already entered the country, and of naturalized US citizens. Beginning in 1947, the fourth wave of Muslim immigrants brought more diversity to the country. This wave included North African and Eastern European people, along with children of the Arab elite. The fifth and final wave began in the 1970s, catalyzed by the change in immigration laws that allowed Asian Muslims to come to the US. A significant number of immigrants from the final group came to the United States fleeing persecution and government corruption in their home countries (Conser & Twiss, 1997).

During the times of slavery in the United States, African American slaves were involuntarily converted from Islam to Christianity, regardless of their religious beliefs. Until the mid 1920s, the practice of Islam was greatly limited within the African American community, as a result of slavery (Ali et al., 2004).

Classification

Because of the plethora of backgrounds from which Muslims come, Muslim American identity is not easily classified. Muslim Americans experience life as religious minorities, an identity that is frequently compounded with racial and ethnic minority identities. For purposes of research, these multiple identities are classified as "within group" variations, and are often overlooked. Making many broad statements about such a diverse religious group is also difficult, when considering the significant variations among subgroups. The collective "Muslim American" identity that has recently emerged

is based on shared Islamic beliefs and similar experiences living as Muslim Americans in the US (Sirin, Bikmen, Mir, Fine, Zaal & Katsiaficas, 2008).

Social Experiences

In Muslim communities, certain characteristics and experiences are common among most members. General social norms exist by which everyone should live. Abdalati (1975) says that the ideal Muslim possess a "sincere love for one's fellow human beings, mercy for the young, respect for elders, comfort and consolation for the distressed" (p. 124) and that they should show their decency by visiting people who are sick, helping those who are grieving, having feelings of brotherhood and social solidarity, and understanding the mutual responsibility between society and the individual (Abdalati, 1975).

In Islam, the wellbeing and prosperity of the society rests on the support of the individual. If the individual falls ill, the society should help him or her in this time of need. Someone who feels indifferent to his or her society is considered a "selfish sinner" whose "morals are in trouble; conscience in disorder; and faith undernourished" (Abdalati, 1975, p. 124). In Muslim communities, neighbors take on a very important social role. It is believed that neighbors should share many things with each other, including gifts and emotions such as celebrations of joys and the mourning of sorrows (Abdalati, 1975).

Hard, honest work is also highly valued. One should earn his or her living through decent labor, and always put forth effort to provide for him or herself. An able person who shows no effort in doing this is seen as a disgrace, and as one who commits a

religious sin. Work ethic is also important in Islamic societies. All business transactions should be honest and respectful to all parties involved. Islam forbids cheating, monopolies, exploitation of customers, and the intentional hiding of defects in merchandise. Also unique to Islamic law is the forbiddance of collecting interest on money lent to people in need (Abdalati, 1975).

Religion

Most salient to the Muslim American identity are the basic foundations of the religion of Islam. Although practiced differently in all countries of the world, some basic tenants are universally recognized. The *Qur'an* is the holy book sent from God by which Muslims abide. It is believed that the *Qur'an* was written by the prophet Muhammed, who was given its sacred contents by the angel Gabriel. The most overarching concept of Islam is the Five Pillars, or five basic principles that serve as a foundation to the religion (Esposito, 1998, as cited in Ali et al., 2004).

The belief, or *iman,* in one God, is the first pillar of Islam. The *shahaada* is the phrase that one must say in order to convert to Islam, and is the basis of the religion. *La liha illallah Muhammedoor Rasoola* literally translates to "there is only one God and Muhammed is his messenger" (Ali et al., 2004, p.637) and thus proclaims a Muslim's *iman* in the one true God.

The second pillar, *salat,* is prayer that is prescribed five times daily for all Muslims. Very precise guidelines are set for *salat,* including the direction in which one must face (east, toward the *Kaaba* holy shrine in Mecca) and the *raka'at,* or units of prayer for the respective prayer times. Each prayer occurs at a specific point in the day

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and is named accordingly. The *fajir* prayer is before sunrise, the *zuhur* in the early afternoon, the *aser* in the mid afternoon, the *maghrib* just after sunset, and the *isha'a* right before bed (Ali et al., 2004). These guiding principles foster unity between all Muslims.

Zakat is the third pillar of Islam. This is the alms tax that Muslims pay to "rectify social inequalities" (Ali et al., 2004, p. 637) as a form of worship. It is estimated that the *zakat* is an average of 2.5% of all financial resources paid each year.

The holy month of *Ramadan* is a very important part of a Muslim's life. During this time, the fourth pillar of Islam, *sawm* (fasting), requires Muslims to endure the entire day, from sunrise to sunset, without consuming water or food or engaging in sexual activity. The concept behind the *sawm* is that it will enable Muslims to reflect on and empathize with the poor and the hungry (Esposito, 1998, as cited in Ali et al., 2004).

The fifth and final pillar of Islam is the *Hajj*. This is the pilgrimage each financially able Muslim should make to Mecca in his or her lifetime. While in Mecca, Muslims engage in a number of intricate ritualistic activities in memory of the prophet Abraham.

Along with the five pillars, some other significant beliefs are central to Islam. According to Abdalati (1975), all people in the Islamic world are seen as equal thereby making second-class citizenship impossible. He goes on to explain that everyone "belongs" to Adam and Eve, that everyone is a creation of Allah, and that because of these things, social injustice and racial prejudice do not "have room" to exist. The concept of piety is very important in Islam, as well as dedicating one's life to God's will.

While keeping this in mind, one should appropriately maintain individual freedom and responsibility. Islamic law forbids gambling, drinking alcohol, and the consumption of pork (Dowd & Nielsen, 2006).

Family

Muslim societies are collectivistic by nature. Thus, as Ali et al. (2004) write, individualism and individuation from one's family is highly discouraged. Families are hierarchical and interdependent, and familial benefits must be considered before decisions are made by any of its members. Family matters are usually kept within the family and are not discussed with anyone else. There is a significant focus on the role of children in the Muslim family. Abdalati (1975) says that children are seen as "joys of life and sources of pride" (p. 119), and goes on to highlight their many rights and responsibilities. Among their rights is the opportunity to have a life full of equal chances, the right to legitimacy (having a father and a mother), and the right to compassionate treatment from members of the community. Regardless of the status of a child's parents, he or she should receive optimum care from the entire Muslim community. In the absence of a child's parent or parents, the community becomes his or her caretaker. This helps uphold the third commandment of Islam, which demands preservation of the lives of children. Parents rely on the principle of *ishan* (what is right, good and beautiful) to guide them through their duties as parents. *Ishan* allows them to have empathy, patience, gratitude, compassion, respect, prayers, and counsel. On the other hand, children have responsibilities toward their parents and communities. They may never cause harm to their parents, and must provide for them in cases of need. Children should strive to make their parents lives comfortable, and never bring shame to the family or community. In

some cases, parent's rules and values may cause their children to be alienated from God. In this case, children should rely on their faith and belief in God, and side with him, not their parents (Abdalati, 1975).

Marriage

In the Islamic world, heterosexual marriage is regarded as something that is religiously virtuous, socially necessary, and morally advantageous (Ali et al., 2004). In the course of a Muslim's life, he or she is expected to be family oriented and, most importantly, seek to create a family of his or her own. In Islam, marriage is viewed as a *mithaqun ghaleez*, or strong bond, and also as a challenging commitment. In the holy *Qur'an*, the prophet states that when a Muslim person gets married, he or she has completed half of his or her religious duties. Also stated in the *Qur'an* is that married couples should be kind and charitable to one another and dedicate themselves, as a couple, to serving Allah (Abdalati, 1975). Ethnic and religious homogeneity is expected in most Islamic marriages. It is uncommon and undesirable for a Muslim to marry outside of his or her religion, as this would taint the purity of the marriage (Ali et al., 2004).

Because marriage and family are central to the Islamic system (Abdalati, 1975), divorce is looked down upon. Although religiously permissible in some cases, most Muslims do not seek divorce and rely on God to help with their marital problems. Intimacy between members of the opposite sex who are not related is seen as unacceptable in Muslim society. Thus, unmarried Muslim men and women should not form close ties with each other, in order to avoid temptation and social stigma. Because such a strong emphasis is put on marriage, unmarried or divorced Muslim women may

feel isolated from the majority of married Muslim women, and may have a difficult time being accepted in society. In some Islamic communities, widowed women and orphaned children are permitted to be integrated into already establish families, thus creating a religiously sanctioned polygamous relationship (Ali et al., 2004).

Gender Roles

Within the Muslim community, gender roles receive much attention. Very clear expectations are set for the behavior of men and women, respectively. Because Islam prescribes such expectations, Muslims manage distinctively gendered identities (Sirin et al., 2008). Most prominent are the guidelines by which women are expected to live. Because of Islam's practical differences from culture to culture, ethnicities and nationalities influence the treatment of women in distinctive ways. Dispute and controversy often arise with respect to the rights, treatment, and responsibilities of Muslim women (Ali et al., 2004). The "nature" of women is sometimes described in terms of their delicateness, sensitivity, and emotions (Dowd & Nielsen, 2006), which has a large impact on their restricted roles. A woman's nature is thought to be protected if she follows Islamic guidelines of gender behavior.

A woman's role in Muslim society is often seen as very submissive. It is expected that women become mothers, and care for their children and for the home. In fact, motherhood is so highly valued that women who do not become mothers are seen as socially devious (Dowd & Nielsen, 2006). For Muslim women, modest dress is prescribed and is carried out much more conservatively than with men. Some Islamic cultures believe that women should cover themselves completely by wearing the *burqa*, a

piece of clothing that covers from head to toe with an opening for the eyes. Muslim American women often choose to wear the *hijab*, or traditional head scarf, which allows the woman to wear other types of clothing, but still covers the majority of her head, leaving the face exposed (Ali et al., 2004).

Within marriage, specific rights and duties exist for women. A woman's main obligation is to always work towards the success and blissfulness of her marriage. To do this, she is required to be faithful, trustworthy, and honest. Abdalati (1975) points out that a woman "must not deceive her mate by deliberately avoiding conception" (p. 118), highlighting the importance of procreating in Muslim communities. Women are not permitted to allow unknown men in their home without the knowledge or consent of their husband. It is also expected that as wives, Muslim women make themselves desirable, attractive, responsive, and cooperative for their husbands. They should never deny their husbands sexually, except when women's health or decency could be compromised. The wife should never do anything that makes her less desirable; but if she does, then her husband has the right to interfere with her freedom to correct her behaviors (Abdalati, 1975).

Fewer expectations and guidelines exist for Muslim men. They are expected to provide for their families by working and being the money-earning individuals of the household (Dowd & Nielsen, 2006). In Islamic culture, men are seen as "trustees, guardians, and protectors" (Abdalati, 1975, p. 117) of women, which clearly illustrates the expectation that they are more dominant. Similar to women, men are expected to become fathers, and are seen as deviants if they do not do so. Men are also given specific duties within a marriage. A Muslim man's role as a husband is seen as a duty to God, and

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all of the behaviors that he should exhibit are seen as religious acts. He should be kind and patient with his wife, treat her with honor, and cause her no harm or grief. For the wife, the husband must provide housing, clothing, food, and general care to the standards by which she lived before getting married. A husband is never permitted to detain his wife with the intention of harming her or getting in the way of her freedom (Abdalati, 1975).

CHAPTER THREE: QUEER IDENTITY IN THE US

The Queer American identity is based on sexual orientation, as opposed to ethnic or religious background, and differs markedly from the two identities previously discussed. Nationality, religion, ethic group, class, disability and numerous other social and identity variables shape the lives of Queer Americans. Thus, their life experiences are particularly culture-bound, making generalizations about the Queer community as a whole virtually impossible. As such, chapter three explores the Queer identity development process as a part of Queer Americans' social experiences, along with the history and classification of this group.

History

Over the last 200 years, ideas of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Questioning, and Queer (Queer) identities have developed by way of transforming social and political conditions in the US. According to D'Augelli & Patterson (1995), the modern notion of a Queer identity is a western construct that has evolved from a number of identities, such as male homosexual identity, the new woman identity, and lesbian, gay and bisexual identities. Before the concept of Queer identities emerged, individuals did not perceive their behavior as a reflection of a significant part of their personhood (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995).

Pre-WWII culture in the United States did not entail a large presence of Queer Americans. In big city settings, small friendship networks existed in which people would meet privately for social gatherings. A small number of gay and lesbian friendly bars and

clubs also provided space for Queer Americans to meet. These resources were not

sufficient enough to provide a strong sense of Queer community or social change, and

such resources would not be seen until after WWII (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). It was

in post-WWII America that a collective Queer identity was able to be established, largely

based on shared experiences within the military. A significant number of gay men were

drafted for the war, and many lesbian women enlisted for service. While in the sex-

segregated setting of the military, Queer people were easily able to find one other and

establish relationships (Bérubé, 1990; D'Emilio, 1983, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson,

1995). Following their military service, many Queer Americans maintained their

relationships with one another. A number of them established and became invested in

social and political interest groups focused on "Homophile Rights" (D'Augelli &

Patterson, 1995).

Eventually, the "Homophile Rights Movement" emerged, officially creating the

structure for a larger Queer community. By trying to integrate Queer Americans into the

greater community, a *public* identity was established and they were seen as a collectively

oppressed minority. Along with this political organization, many Queer Americans

migrated to large cities throughout the US, creating physical communities in which it was

safer to live (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995).

Beginning in 1951, significant historical events took place that furthered the rights

of the US Queer community. Los Angeles, California was home to the first official

American gay rights organization, called the Mattachine Society. Following this, The

Daughters of Bilitis was formed in 1955 in San Francisco, California. Focused on the

lesbian population, this group provided social, educational, and consciousness-raising

functions throughout the city. Both of these groundbreaking groups helped Queer

individuals adjust to society by encouraging positive self-image development and by

educating the general public about the effects of anti-Queer behavior (D'Augelli &

Patterson, 1995).

Political activism and academic research began to change opinions on

homosexuality and the Queer community. Hooker (1957, as cited in D'Augelli &

Patterson, 1995) found no evidence of psychopathology in gay men, thus fueling a shift

in the negative thinking that defined societal attitudes toward Queer Americans. In 1973,

the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental

illnesses (Bayer, 1987, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). Starting in the 1960s,

Queer communities began to rely on public confrontation and protest to bring attention to

discriminatory laws and policies. In 1962, Illinois became the first state to decriminalize

same-sex behavior between consenting adults (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995).

Perhaps the most significant event in the history of Queer America occurred on

June 27th, 1969. On this day in New York City's Greenwich Village, police raided a local

gay bar, named the Stonewall Inn. The raid acted as a catalyst for Queer people around

the country to riot, marking a significant community-building phase in Queer American

history. During this period, visible Queer subcultures developed, including a number of

gay and lesbian institutions and social settings. The motto of the Stonewall Rebellion was

"out of the closets and into the streets" (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995, p. 296). This

philosophy stemmed from the belief that remaining invisible further perpetuated

oppression by leaving stereotypes and myths unchallenged. Challenging preconceived

notions of the Queer community paved the way for a lesbian-feminist movement

(Krieger, 1982; Wolf, 1979, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995) that challenged the concept of women's sexuality by deconstructing the notion of gender altogether. Because of the reduced social stigma this feminist movement catalyzed, more women were comfortable identifying as lesbian or bisexual (Faderman, 1984, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995).

The 1970s provided more motivation for political solidification, beginning with the public disapproval and backlash of the Queer community by a conservative political group called the New Right (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). The group's leaders and followers believed that homosexuality was a sin and that anyone who identified as such was a social deviant who had to be stopped. In 1977, American singer Anita Bryant began the "Save our Children" campaign in Florida to repeal a countywide ordinance that prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Also during this time, she supported legislation in California to ban lesbians and gay men from teaching. Although Bryant's Floridian campaign was successful, the Queer community responded by unprecedented protests, boycotts, and emerging political force. In 1977, Harvey Milk, an openly gay politician, was elected to the Board of Supervisors in San Francisco, California. His strong political involvement brought the Queer community to the forefront of many issues in San Francisco, and provided motivation for many groups around the country to mobilize. Seen as a pioneer and hero by most Queer Americans, Milk had many strong opponents. A year after his election, Milk was assassinated by one of his colleagues. This tragedy brought even more attention to the intense threat posed by such progressive political involvement (Shilts, 1982, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995) and to the need for social change.

During the 1980s, the Religious Right launched numerous attacks against Queer Americans. In retaliation, the Queer community organized massive public protests (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995), rejecting the second-class treatment that they had been subjected to in the recent past. Radical religious groups became the "common enemy" of the US Queer community, which helped unite and solidify lesbians and gay men as a group. The HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980s was also very important to Queer Americans of that time. Because an overwhelming number of gay men were infected with HIV, the Queer community encouraged political organization that supported funding for HIV/AIDS research and expansion of community resources. The HIV epidemic brought the lives of Queer Americans into public awareness in an unparalleled way (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). Community power was seen in groups such as the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, and Queer Nation, which demonstrated a strong opposition to political nonresponsiveness to the HIV epidemic that was gravely impacting the Queer community (Karmer, 1989, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995).

All of these events helped shape the development of the Queer American community that exists today. Without the numerous political protests, debates, and outright perseverance of so many in the past, Queer American identity would be painted on a very different canvas.

Classification

Queer identification is present in every community throughout the world. Anyone can identify as non-heterosexual, regardless of race, gender, class, national origin, or any other demographic category. The term "sexual minority" is often used in research to refer

to any possibility of same-sex attractions, behaviors, and identities, three dimensions that are believed to be important components of a Queer identity (Omoto & Kurtzman, 2006). Mayer et al. (2008) note the importance of understanding that sexual orientation encompasses more than sexual behavior. Individuals who identify with a specific sexual minority group do not have to engage in sexual behaviors to claim such identification.

Because generalizations about the Queer community are nearly impossible, most current research aims to understand smaller subgroups of Queer people, such as those who identify with specific religious, ethnic, or national backgrounds (Clarke & Peel, 2007). Early studies of Queer Americans generally used urban residents of California or New York City as subjects. These samples were not representative of the entire Queer community and were therefore inapplicable to most Queer Americans (Clarke & Peel, 2007). More recent efforts to study sexual identity development have been hindered by a number of methodological deficits, including the underrepresentation of women, bisexual people and ethnic minorities, and the nonrepresentation of sexual minority youth who reject Queer identification (Omoto & Kurtzman, 2006). These challenges have rendered overall classification invalid, thus necessitating a different method of exploring Queer American experiences.

Social Experiences

Unlike Arab and Muslim Americans, Queer Americans do not have a defined set of characteristics by which the group generally lives. Other communities with which they identify (e.g. racial, ethnic, religious groups) provide them with these social norms. Their experiences with religion, family structure, marriage, and gender roles are so diverse that

it is impossible to make generalizations about them. Also unique to Queer Americans is the coming out process, in which they make known their sexual orientation to family, friends and coworkers.

Identity Development

For many years, researchers tried to explain the Queer American experience in a generalized way (Bohan, 1996). The identity development models created by these researchers, however, were often criticized for their lack of attention to individual and cultural differences within the Queer community. According to Clarke & Peel (2007), Queer identity adds a "wrinkle" to all identities, life tasks, and circumstances, therefore necessitating an understanding of how all of these variables interact with one another. Keeping this in mind, it is simple to see why an overall identity development *model* is not valid when studying the experiences of all Queer Americans.

Although there is not one model that can accurately describe identity development for Queer Americans, there are shared experiences in the identity development process. During this time, developmental tasks that are unique to Queer identified persons greatly influence overall identity formation. The issues faced in this process are experienced *in addition to*, not instead of, usual developmental tasks faced by all people (Bohan, 1996). It is important to note that a Queer identity is an achieved, not ascribed status. Those who are a part of the sexual majority do not often have the task of self-consciously identifying their sexual orientation (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995) and therefore do not experience the related developmental process. In addition, people of most minority groups experience identity development in relation to already known identities; whereas Queer

individuals acknowledge their membership in, then change their attitudes towards their identities (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996 as cited in Sanlo, 1998). For Queer Americans, these tasks, along with many others, become the focus of integrating their sexual minority identity with all other aspects of their lives.

Sexual orientation is not something that is usually visible to oneself or other members of a community (Wall & Evans, 1991, as cited in Sanlo, 1998). Therefore, Queer Americans have a hard time identifying with and receiving support from others in their community in the beginning stages of the Queer identity development process. Because parents of Queer people are usually heterosexual, they are unable to provide support as members of the same minority group as their children. This leaves sexual minority children to explore their identities by themselves, often "internaliz[ing] society's ideology of sex and gender at an early age" (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995, p. 335). This process usually results in Queer people's experience of *internalized homophobia*, or negative feelings toward themselves and other people who identify as sexual minorities. Initially, lesbians and gay men are socialized as members of the majority group (i.e., heterosexuals) (Yearwood & Weinberg, 1979, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). During this socialization, they often learn negative attitudes about lesbians and gay men from the heterosexist majority, before applying the label of Queer to themselves. This *internalized heterosexism* can cause distress in identity formation and necessitates a transformation of identity to achieve self-esteem and positive community identification (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995).

During adolescence, all youths must deal with their emerging sexualities as part of their developmental processes (Omoto & Kurtzman, 2006). Normal challenges with

this are exacerbated for Queer youth, because they face social stigmatization on top of negotiating normal sexual identity development (Rotherhan-Borus & Fernandez, 1995, as cited in Omoto & Kurtzman, 2006). According to D'Augelli & Patterson (1995), Queer young people are denied the privilege of normal socialization structures due to societal homophobia. This type of societal oppression can be seen in the pressure exerted on young people, regardless of their sexual identities, to date the opposite sex. Queer youth who experience this are likely to hide their sexual identities from others, and may thus experience fear and anxiety about social interactions. For these reasons, Queer youth may actually experience stronger identification with their sexual orientation than heterosexuals (Omoto & Kurtzman, 2006).

Coming Out

Unlike other minority groups, Queer Americans often declare their *invisible* minority status to people with whom they work and live. After a complex sequence of events, including acknowledging, recognizing, and labeling their sexual orientation, Queer identified people are able to disclose their identity to others. This process, called *coming out* is a strategy that combats prejudice and reduces stereotypes while also eliminating personal isolation (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). In the process of Queer identity development, people acquire strategies to circumnavigate stigmas associated with a non-heterosexual identity. Often, this leads to boundaries between their lives within, and outside of, the Queer community. According to D'Augelli & Patterson (1995), the coming out process is "a gradual erosion of these boundaries such that one is known as [Queer] in all crucial life domains" (p. 302). As with Queer identity development, this community's intragroup diversity causes a wide variety of experiences with the coming

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out process. Those with multiple community identities (i.e., Queer People of Color) may experience a more difficult coming out process, as they must reconcile these with their Queer identities (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995).

The coming out process does not come without risk. Queer people jeopardize their social acceptance and risk multiple forms of discrimination, including violence, which can produce psychological maladjustments that last significantly longer than the physical effects of such events (Garnets, Herek & Levy, 1990, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). For Queer people of certain ethnic, religious, racial, or occupational groups, coming out is not a viable option, and they are forced to live with repressed sexual identities (Sanlo, 1998). Those who choose to come out usually become identified primarily in terms of their Queer identity by people outside of the community (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995).

The Queer community has embraced coming out as a rite of passage through which its members gain great strength and life experience. According to Zimmerman (1984, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995), telling one's coming out story has become a common ritual through which group identity affirmation and bonding is achieved.

CHAPTER FOUR: PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

With a clearer understanding of Arab, Muslim and Queer American identities, this chapter explores the stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination faced by each community. Negative stereotypes about minority communities reflect historically evolved cultural ideologies that rationalize their oppression (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). Lack of understanding and education about these ideologies perpetuates this subjugation, often by people who are unaware that they are affecting minority communities.

Arab Americans

In the United States, there are many negative ethnic images relating to the Arab American community. This leads to ethnically based stereotypes, many of which are psychologically and physically harmful. According to Schur (2005) "Arabs are hardly ever seen as ordinary people, practicing law, driving taxis, singing lullabies, or healing the sick" (p. 118). Western media is seen as a contributor to Arab American stereotypes, often portraying them as excessively wealthy, sensuous, irrational and violent. Representations of Arabs as "war-like, lustful heathens" (Schur, 2005 p. 115) have been fixed in western society for approximately eight centuries (Schur, 2005).

Many Americans misunderstand the Arab American family structure. By American standards, the patrilineal familial organization is seen as oppressive to the rest of the family. Another common misunderstanding is the difference between Arab, Muslim, and Islam, because the religion of Islam is often racialized. In the discourse of US citizenship, Islam has been identified as a "religion of color" (Suleiman, 1999, p.259),

whereas Christianity has been equivocated with being white; therefore creating the common assumption that all Arabs are Muslim (Suleiman, 1999).

Media geared toward American children often contains negative images and portrayals of Arabs. Schur (2005) cites the popular Disney movie *Aladdin* as one such example. In the movie, the protagonists are light skinned characters with Anglo-American accents, whereas the antagonists are represented as dark skinned with Arabic accents and unsightly facial features. Schur also mentions that popular Sunday morning television cartoons frequently cast Arab characters as villains. In an episode of *Batman*, fanatic, dark skinned Arabs armed with sabers and rifles were planning to take over the earth. Video games, comic books, and popular films also portray negative stereotypes of Arabs. Women are often seen as belly dancers and harem girls, with men depicted as violent terrorists, oil sheiks, and marauding tribesmen who kidnap blonde, white women. Misrepresentation of Arabs can even be found in History and Geography textbooks used by school children. According to Schur (2005), high school teachers have mentioned that there is an overportrayal of deserts, camels, and nomads in the Middle East chapters of their books. These negative images are easily absorbed by children, often causing intolerance within the dominant culture while simultaneously damaging self-image and pride of Arab American children. Arab children experience dissonance with negative cultural messages, because they conflict with values and traditions they learn from their family. This can cause great conflict in the development of Arab American children, as they are being tugged in two different directions (Schur, 2005).

Along with this plethora of stereotypes, Arab Americans experience prejudice and discrimination because of their ethnic identification. The psychological and emotional

wellbeing of Arab Americans is compromised by experiences like humiliating name-calling, harassment, and the fear of being attacked. Hate crimes are frequently committed against them, including battery, vandalism, assault, and threats with the intent to commit crimes. Institutional discrimination is also experienced, as exemplified by the Federal Aviation Administration's regulations and racial profiling of Arab people (Suleiman, 1999). The US government's application of new immigration laws, believed to be grounded in racial profiling, singles out Muslims and Arabs for more intensive inquiry (Schur, 2005).

According to Suleiman (1999), the US legal system is often a perpetrator of social injustice, as seen in some of its biases against Arab Americans. The administration of justice in an equitable manner is thereby hindered, affecting jury trials, bench trials, and plea bargains. In many cases involving sexual assault, sentences are harsher if the perpetrator is an Arab male and the victim is not. In many instances, Arab lawyers prefer plea bargains or bench trials to jury conviction, to avoid prejudice by the jury (Suleiman, 1999).

Arab Americans also experience prejudice and discrimination while accessing social services. According to Suleiman (1999), behaviors commonly exhibited by workers in the American welfare system indicate their belief that Arab Americans abuse these services. This negative stereotype affects the comfort with which welfare is accessed. Police are also notorious for mistreating and discriminating against Arabs. Their misconceptions of Arab social norms interfere with the fair administration of justice, as seen in many domestic violence cases. Wife beating is viewed as an acceptable

Arab behavior by many Americans, thus when complaints are received by police, they are often ignored (Suleiman, 1999).

Many world events have lead to increased instances of prejudice and discrimination for Arab Americans. In the 1980s, airline hijackings, terrorist attacks, and the bombing of PanAm flight 103 caused conflict between the Arab and American communities (Schur, 2005). The World Trade Center terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 spawned a number of discriminatory retaliations against Arab Americans. On September 12, 2001, hundreds of distraught white Americans surrounded the largest Arab mosque in Chicago in violent protest of the attacks. Some of the protestors carried weapons, shouting "Kill the Arabs" (Schur, 2005 p. 152). By December 2001, more than 100 hate crimes against Arabs, Muslims and those perceived to be Arab or Muslim were reported to the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. The Arab American Institute reported over 400 acts of violence in the month following September 11, including murders, attacks on Mosques, and verbal threats. In addition, terrorism became associated with Arabs, and all Arabs with Islam. Following the attacks, many Americans questioned Arab American's loyalty to the United States (Schur, 2005), leaving them in a very vulnerable position.

The effects of these experiences on Arab Americans have caused unnecessary pain and suffering based solely on ethnic identity. Many Arab Americans feel pressure to abandon their values and norms to conform to those of the American majority (Schur, 2005). This is a major roadblock to Arab Americans establishing solid identities and living healthy lives.

Muslim Americans

Muslim Americans also face discrimination and prejudice, however in this case it is based on their religious, not ethnic identities. Their experiences with violence, threats, and stereotyping are very similar to those of Arab Americans, as Muslims are often assumed to be Arab (Ali et al., 2004). Many Americans are ignorant about and suspicious of Muslims. According to Ali et al. (2004), a recent poll showed that 50% of people surveyed believed that "Islam is inherently anti-American, anti-western or supportive of terrorism" (p. 635). Of those 50%, only 5% had knowingly come into contact with a Muslim (Ali et al., 2004), showing that their prejudices were not grounded in life experiences. Westerners commonly see Muslims as the enemy and frequently label them as terrorists (Dowd & Nielsen, 2006). In addition, some non-Muslim Americans think that Islam is a religion that permits holy wars, is anti-Jesus, supports polygamy, does not allow divorce, and discriminates against women (Abdalati, 1975). As with Arab Americans, popular media often portrays Muslim Americans negatively. Shaheen (2003, as cited in Sirin et al., 2008) reviewed over 900 Hollywood films that overwhelmingly illustrated an unfavorable view of Muslims.

Attitudes towards Muslims in the United States have never been overly positive. American foreign policy, along with the September 11 terrorist attacks, has further affected the favorability of Muslim Americans. Reactionary governmental policies on immigration restricted people from Muslim majority countries from gaining US citizenship. Public scrutiny and surveillance of Muslims has increased greatly due to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and recent terrorist attacks in the Middle East and Europe (Sirin et al., 2008). The hostile post-9/11 climate in the United States has caused

Muslim Americans to worry about discrimination. Since September 11, the Council of American-Islamic Relations has received over 700 reports of discrimination against Muslims. Among these reports are violent attacks and threats, denial of religious accommodations, job termination, verbal abuse, unequal treatment, denial of employment, and denial of access to public facilities (Ali et al., 2004).

As a result of this discrimination and prejudice, many Muslim Americans change their religious practices to assimilate into the American mainstream. This practice is known as *taqqiya*, or hiding one's religious identity (Dowd & Nielsen, 2006) to avoid conflict. Some Muslim American women have decided to stop wearing the *hijab* to avoid negative stereotypes and discrimination from others (Ali et al., 2004). These practices are detrimental to psychological wellbeing, as they can cause anxiety, depression, and fear (Down & Nielsen, 2006).

Queer Americans

Prejudice and discrimination toward the Queer community is unique, because it is based on the invisible construct of sexual orientation. People cannot assume that one is Queer based on their skin color, spoken accent, or articles of clothing. Therefore, in any environment or community, the possibility of Queer identity exists. Because of its invisibility, this identity is likely to elicit greater prejudice if it is detected or revealed (Bohan, 1996). Also unique to the Queer community is its lack of protection and rights by laws in the United States.

As with Arab and Muslim Americans, Queer Americans are stereotyped, which leads to discrimination and prejudice. One of the most common stereotypes is that Queer

identity is inherently related to gender role nonconformity. People who express behavior that is inconsistent with cultural gender prescriptions are likely to be labeled as Queer. For example, if a woman expresses her gender in ways that are culturally defined as "masculine," she is assumed to be a lesbian. If a man expresses "feminine" behavior, he is assumed to be gay (Herek, 1984; Kite & Deaux, 1986, 1987, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). Other stereotypes about Queer Americans include that they are animalistic, hypersexual, overvisible, heretical, and conspiratorial (Gilman, 1985, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995).

Heterosexism is a very significant form of prejudice experienced by people who are Queer. According to Herek (1990), heterosexism is "an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship or community" (as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995 p. 321). This ideology is detrimental to Queer society and culture, because it perpetuates the view that their sexual orientations are innately wrong. This label reinforces the belief that Queer Americans are alien, deviant, and dysfunctional, ultimately impeding connections inside and outside of Queer communities (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). Heterosexism is similar to most forms of prejudice, but is distinctive in that it is socially acceptable by the majority (Bohan, 1996).

Other forms of discrimination experienced by the Queer community include physical and emotional abuse. According to the Gay & Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute (1992) Queer people are faced with harassment and threats of violence, bomb threats, physical assault, police abuse, vandalism, arson, and homicide. Verbal harassment is the most common form of abuse perpetrated against Queer individuals.

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Increased visibility due to the HIV epidemic has caused violence to increase as well (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). In a study on victimization in the Queer community, Omoto and Kurtzman (2006) describe six types of common hate crime occurrences: verbal abuse, threats of physical attack, objects being thrown, assaults, threats with weapons, and sexual assaults. Of the people interviewed in the study, 81% reported verbal abuse related to their Queer identity, 38% had been threatened with physical attacks, 22% had objects thrown at them, 15% had been physically assaulted, 6% assaulted with a weapon, and 16% had been sexually assaulted (Omoto & Kurtzman, 2006). Survivors of such hate crimes may experience increased discrimination and stigma from people who have learned about their sexual minority status as a result of the victimization. This *secondary victimization* (Berril & Herek, 1992, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995) can further damage a Queer person psychologically, and is often expressed explicitly by police, judges, and other representatives of the criminal justice system.

Ironically, people who struggle with their own sexual orientation identity are frequently perpetrators of hate crimes against Queer Americans. According to D'Augelli and Patterson (1995), "expressing antigay hostility represents an unconscious strategy through which they can avoid an internal conflict by externalizing it" (p. 330). Because people become afraid of their own feelings, they project their discomfort onto other Queer individuals, thereby symbolically attacking the notion of identifying as Queer.

As mentioned above, Queer Americans are one of the only minority groups that are unprotected from hate crimes and discrimination at a federal level. Current social policies and laws do not protect the basic rights of Queer-identified people. In most civil

rights legislature, sexual orientation is left out of the discussion, despite clear evidence that Queer American's rights are regularly denied (Green, 1992; Rivera 1991, as cited in D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). According to the Human Rights Campaign [HRC] (2009), only fourteen states and the District of Columbia legally recognize same-sex relationships. Of these states, eight currently have constitutional amendments or laws restricting marriage to one man and one woman. In total, 40 of the 50 US States have statewide prohibitions of same-sex marriage (HRC, 2009). Although some states have legalized same-sex unions, they are not recognized at a national level, restricting couples with legal rights to specific geographic areas.

Queer Americans suffer from feelings of sadness and anxiety as a result of their experiences with prejudice and discrimination. They also associate danger, pain, and punishment with their identities rather than intimacy, love, and community (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). These associations can cause extreme difficulties in relationship building, self-esteem and community identification.

CHAPTER FIVE: MULTIPLE MINORITY COMMUNITY NEEDS

The prejudice and discrimination faced by the communities previously discussed

puts them at risk for certain psychological, physical, and emotional conditions. Thus,

specific needs arise within each respective community. Arab Americans are at a higher

risk than most communities for substance abuse, PTSD, and pathological gambling (Lee,

2006). Muslim Americans are at risk for PTSD, alcoholism, and suicide (Ali et al., 2004).

Substance abuse, obesity, tobacco use, eating and body image disorders, suicide, and HIV

transmission are areas of heightened risk for Queer Americans (Mayer et al., 2008).

These risks are exacerbated in people who identify as Queer Muslim Arab Americans. In

this chapter, the interaction of these three identities is explored.

Multiple Minority Identification

The risks associated with minority identification can be detrimental to one's

mental, physical, and emotional well-being. When all three previously mentioned

identities are combined, the compounding effect of such identification is complicated,

intricate and creates even more unique needs. Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) outline

two theories associated with the intersections of multiple minority identities. Each poses

a different method by which multiple minority statuses interact with one another.

Double Jeopardy

The double jeopardy model claims "disadvantage accrues with each of a person's

subordinate-group identities" (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008, p. 377). Therefore, the

more minority intersections a person has, the more prejudice, discrimination, and distress he or she will experience. Applying this idea to someone who identifies as a Queer Muslim Arab American, oppression would be experienced three times as significantly as someone who has no minority identities.

Within the Queer community, someone who identifies as a Queer Muslim Arab American would be seen as a racial and religious minority. Because the Queer community reflects the larger society's prejudices (Bohan, 1996), Queer Muslim Arab Americans are likely to experience the same types of discrimination by the Queer community as by society as a whole. Although not as extreme as with Arab and Muslim communities, the disadvantages of being a Queer Muslim Arab American in a Queer community would cause feelings of loneliness and isolation.

In these scenarios, it is easy to see why Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) explain the *double jeopardy* model as compounding the effects of multiple minority identity intersections. A Queer Muslim Arab American experiences discrimination from each community with which they identify, each adding another layer of oppression.

Intersectional Invisibility

Grounded in social dominance theory, the Subordinate Male Target Hypothesis (SMTH) holds that subordinate men are the focus of the most oppression, usually implemented by dominant men. The theory of *Intersectional Invisibility* builds on this, claiming that androcentrism, heterocentrism, and ethnocentrism define the "prototypical person" as a white heterosexual male. The more minority identity intersections that a person has, the further they drift from this "prototype" causing them to become

"invisible" in the path of oppression (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). For someone who has only one minority identity, discrimination would therefore be more intense, because they are closer to fitting the prototypical white, heterosexual, male ideal. For example, a Queer white man would likely experience more discrimination than an African American lesbian woman. The African American lesbian woman identifies with three minority statuses, each causing her to become more "invisible." The Queer white man, having only one minority status, is so close to achieving the "prototype" that members of the dominant community would be harsher in their discrimination.

With this model, it is hypothesized that as the number of multiple minority identities one has increases, the discrimination and prejudice they experience decreases (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Applied to Queer Muslim Arab Americans, this theory would pose that they experience less discrimination and prejudice than white Queer Americans, heterosexual Muslim Americans, and Christian Arab Americans.

Theory Application

Depending on the community with which Queer Muslim Arab Americans are interacting, each model's applicability differs. Intersectional Invisibility would argue that during interactions with Arab Muslims, it is likely that Queer Muslim Arab Americans face *increased* discrimination. This is because they are closer to the prototype of heterosexual Arab Muslims, and are therefore highly "visible." Double Jeopardy, on the other hand, would argue that in this situation, Queer Muslim Arab Americans would experience *less* discrimination because their ethnic and religious identities are the same as those with whom they are interacting, thus creating only one minority identity.

When interacting with dominant American culture (i.e., white, heterosexual males), Queer Muslim Arab Americans' experiences are much different. When seen through the lens of Intersectional Invisibility, they experience *less* discrimination in this setting. As sexual, religious, and ethnic minorities, they become markedly invisible, commanding little attention and discrimination from the dominant culture. According to Double Jeopardy, however, this situation would warrant *more* discrimination based on Queer Muslim Arab Americans' compounded minority identities.

These interactions lead to the understanding that *Intersectional Invisibility* is most applicable when Queer Muslim Arab Americans interact with Arab Muslims. Because of the mutual focus on family, honor, and pride in both Arab and Muslim communities, these two identities reinforce one another. The preservation of the collective Arab Muslim identity becomes extremely significant, and is threatened by the presence of a Queer identity.

The *Double Jeopardy* theory is best applied to Queer Muslim Arab Americans interacting with dominant American or Queer American culture. The discrimination faced in these communities is compounded with each minority status that is not shared by the group's majority. In Queer communities, experiences are based on two minority statuses (religion and ethnicity), whereas in heterosexual American communities, discrimination is based on three (religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation).

Identity Interactions

The interactions of a Queer Muslim Arab American's identities are unique; some clashing with others, and some closely mirroring others. For example, many of the core

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values of Arab and Muslim Americans are strikingly similar. Their focus on religion, marriage, family and gender roles are nearly the same, making identity integration simple. Also important to note is people who are Arab and Muslim usually receive support from their families and communities that reinforce their identification with each community.

When a Queer identity is added to the equation, it is safe to say that Arab Muslims' identity integration becomes much more difficult. This part of their identity will most likely not be supported and affirmed by their Arab and Muslim communities, throwing them into an unfamiliar identity development process. Having been accustomed to the support of other Arab Muslims, they are likely to experience confusion and distress when trying to navigate their Queer identity without such support.

Arab Muslim's focus on marriage is often incompatible with Queer American identity. In many of the United States, Queer couples cannot marry. The religion of Islam does not allow for Queer marriage, creating another conflict. As a Queer Muslim Arab American, the pressure to get married mixed with the inability to do so may cause feelings of failure or hopelessness.

Also incompatible with Queer Identity are Arab Muslims' family structures. Queer couples cannot procreate and therefore do not usually build families of their own. Some Queer couples adopt children, however this is not seen as fulfilling the Arab and Muslim duty of producing offspring. In addition, the patrilineal nature of most Arab Muslim families does not fit with a household in which a same-gender couple lives. Neither partner would be able to establish a "family name" and they would have a

difficult time defining the social class to which they belong. The gender roles normally fulfilled by Arab Muslims are also problematic in relation to same-gender Muslim Arab American couples. The roles normally played by the opposite gender would have to be integrated into each partner's identity in order to maintain a stable household. These expectations potentially create feelings of confusion and inferiority for Queer Muslim Arab Americans.

It is significant that Queer Muslim Arab Americans first identify with their Muslim and Arab communities before the Queer community. As D'Augelli and Patterson (1995) stated, Queer identity is an achieved status that is not known at birth. By this token, it could be hypothesized that the ideals of Arab and Muslim identities, having more time to develop, could overpower one's Queer identity, causing them to live in constant internal conflict once identified with all three communities.

Community Needs

As a result of identity intersections, the Queer Muslim Arab American community has very difficult needs. When looking at the risks associated with each individual community, concerns arise for the wellbeing of its members. When combining all three identities this concern is multiplied as PTSD, pathological gambling, alcoholism, suicide, substance abuse, obesity, tobacco use, eating and body image disorders, and HIV transmission all become increased risks. This plethora of concerns merits support, education and prevention within all communities.

Counselors, psychologists, educators, and religious leaders should all be educated on the intricacies of Queer Muslim Arab American identity. Within the Queer

community, people who act in supportive roles should be made aware of the struggles faced by those who also identify as Muslim and Arab. They should be sensitive to the social norms that may change the way Arab Muslims access support systems. For example, most Arab Muslim families rely on each other in times of need thereby making the concept of counseling foreign to many of them (Lee, 2006). This could cause reluctance in seeking treatment for psychological problems. If providers are aware of this and their cultural norms, they can provide more effective services to the target community. Within the Arab Muslim community, efforts should be made to redefine Queer identity as something that can be discussed and accepted. The unique identity development process of Queer Muslim Arab Americans should be examined, in order to properly understand and diagnose psychological and emotional problems.

Community psychologists have an opportunity to create resources for Queer Arab Muslim Americans and the people with whom they interact. By applying psychological research to community support projects, they can help address social issues inherent to this community. By empowering people with these minority identities, they can recruit the Queer Muslim Arab American community to help further research in the field. Specifically, psychologists can help establish support groups, prevention programs, educational trainings, and treatment models that are culturally competent. In doing so, these resources will be accessible and effective and will ultimately help Queer Muslim Arab Americans lead more authentic and overall better lives.

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