Prejudice Towards Arabs/Middle Eastern Americans

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What do we know about Arab/MENA Americans?
Diversity of the Middle East/North Africa
The Psychology of Arab/MENA Americans

- Simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility
  - Lack of recognition by government structures

- Consistent “othering” leads to discrimination
Ethnoreligious Prejudice

• “Arab” and “Muslim” conflated
  – Arab Muslims constitute only 26% of the Muslim community in the U.S.
  – According to an 2002 AAIF survey, approximately 63% of Arab Americans identify as Christians and 24% identify as Muslim

• Islamophobia impacts all Arab/MENA Americans
Discrimination Timeline

• Discrimination towards Arabs and individuals of Middle Eastern descent in the United States was reported as early as the 1900’s (Naber, 2000).

• The events of September 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2001 led to a sharp increase in prejudice and discrimination towards persons of Arab and Middle Eastern descent (Ajrouch, 2005; Ibish, 2003).

• Shortly after 9/11, President George W. Bush was quoted as saying “This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while…”

• Fast forward to 2017: Muslim Ban
What Predicts Prejudice towards Middle Easterners/Arabs?

• Religiosity
  – To what extent does religiosity impact prejudice toward Middle Easterners (Awad & Hall-Clark, 2009)
Right-Wing Authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1981)

• Individuals high in RWA
  – exhibit high degrees of deference to authority
  – Aggression toward out-groups when authorities permit that aggression
  – Hold traditional values endorsed by authorities

• RWA is related to prejudicial attitudes

• Two characteristics of individuals high RWA lead them to be prejudiced
  – Organize worldview in terms of in-groups and out-groups and perceive the out-group as a threat
  – Self-righteousness
Predictors of Prejudice: RWA

• Mediation results extended to religious fundamentalism (Johnson, Labou, Rowatt, Patock-Peckham, & Carlisle, 2012)

• RWA also positively predicted
  – endorsement of violent action toward the Middle East (Henry, Sidanios, Levin, & Pratto, 2005)
  – support of the death penalty when linked to Arabs (Dambrun, 2007)
Predictors of Prejudice: SDO

• Those high in Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; e.g. with a tendency to think one’s ingroup is superior and outgroups are inferior)
  – were more likely to hold negative prejudices toward Arab groups (Dambrun, 2007; Henry et al., 2005; Rowatt, Franklin, & Cotton, 2005)

• The endorsement of SDO has been associated with
  – offering less help to Arab students (Halabi, Dovidio, & Nadler, 2008)
  – less leniency toward Arab immigrant criminal offenders (Green, Thomsen, Sidanius, Staerklé, & Potanina, 2009).
  – more stereotyping of Arabs (Oswald, 2005)
  – greater social distance between themselves and Arabs
Experience of Discrimination

• In Zogby’s (2002) poll of 505 Arab Americans, 1 in 3 individuals reported that they have experienced discrimination.

• In addition, 40% of those surveyed know someone who was discriminated against since 9/11.

• Approximately 66% expressed concern about the “long term effects of discrimination”

• 78% reported feeling that there has been more profiling of Arab Americans since September 11.
Experiences of Discrimination

• Post 9/11 (Sept 11, 2011- October 11, 2002)
  – 80 cases of Arab Americans being removed from planes
  – 800 cases of employment discrimination
  – 700 cases of violence
• More recent data shows that “anti-Arab” hate crimes surged by 219% from 2014 to 2015
• Increase in immigration and deportation fears
How does Acculturation Impact the Experience of Discrimination?

• Awad (2010) indicates a continued problem of discrimination for Arab-American/Middle Eastern Americans
  – 52% of the study sample reported that it has been implied that they were dangerous or violent as a result of their ethnicity.

• Muslims perceived more discrimination than did Christians in the sample.
Consequences of Discrimination

- Arab Americans who experience discrimination report higher levels of psychological distress (Ahmed, Kia-Keating, & Tsai, 2011; Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Padela & Heisler, 2010).
- Related to lower levels of happiness and poorer overall health
- According to the Health Minds study, Arab/MENA Americans have the highest prevalence of depression and anxiety compared to other students of color and white students (Lipson, Kern, Eisenberg & Breland-Noble, 2018).
Cumulative Racial/Ethnic Trauma of MENA Americans
• The current political climate in the U.S. continues to contribute to prejudice toward people of Middle Eastern descent.

• Future Directions
  – Comparisons across ethnic minority groups similar to the Healthy Minds Study

• We need a separate census category for Arab/Middle Eastern and North African populations.
AMENA-Psy

- The American Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African Psychological Association (AMENA-Psy)
- [www.amenapsy.org](http://www.amenapsy.org)
- [@amenapsy](https://twitter.com/amenapsy)