A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE MIDDLE EAST:
How social workers can help

Chris Carlozzo
Christopher.Carlozzo@stonybrook.edu
A MESSAGE FROM THE PAST....
HOW MANY MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES CAN YOU NAME?
COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST

- Algeria
- Bahrain
- Israel
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Jordan
- Iraq
- Oman
  - Palestine
  - Qatar
  - Saudi Arabia
  - Somalia
  - Sudan
  - Syria
  - Tunisia
- Lebanon
- Libya
- Morocco
- Mauritania
- The United Arab Emirates
- Yemen
- Kuwait
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<th>2013</th>
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What is the Middle East?

- Countries from Egypt east to the Persian Gulf,
- Israel and Iran.
- Turkey is sometimes Middle East or Europe.
- North Africa - Middle East and North Africa (MENA)
- Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh are usually described as South Asia.
WHO IS AN ARAB?

“Arab” is those who speak Arabic as their first language.

Most Arabs are Muslims but there are also

- Millions of Christian Arabs
- Thousands of Jewish Arabs

Just as there are Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Americans.
There are an estimated 1.57 billion Muslims in the world.

The Ten Countries with the Largest Muslim population:

Indonesia (202.9 million)  Pakistan (174.1 million)
India (160.9 million)      Bangladesh (145.3 million)
Egypt (78.5 million)       Nigeria (78.1 million)
Iran (73.8 million)        Turkey (73.6 million)
Algeria (34.2 million)     Morocco (31.9 million)
It is estimated at least 600,000 Muslims live in New York City, and more than 75,000 live on Long Island. (Carnes, 2015)
“The news media are, for the most part, the bringers of bad news... and it's not entirely the media's fault, bad news gets higher ratings and sells more papers than good news.”

Peter McWilliams
Stereotypes are often perpetuated by the media.
From other parts of the world we only see a snapshot or small piece of radical beliefs.
**Myth**

"Arab" and "Muslim" refer to the same people.

Islam is fundamentally different from Christianity and Judaism.

Islam is oppressive toward women.

Muslims hate all non-believers, and our cultural differences are insurmountable.

Muslims are fanatics.

Islam is violent.

Muslims are all foreigners who cannot adapt to Western societies.

Muslims live in medieval times, unable to adapt to the current world.

**Fact**

One is religion the other is a language

Islam is recognizes both religions as having historical ties and the same prophets and God.

In most sects of the religion women are considered sacred and are protected from harm

Many Muslims want to adopt (or adapt) other aspects of Western culture and technology

Most are happy people who love their family, their community and culture.
The religion itself speaks of peace, social justice and avoiding wrongdoing

Due to our advanced globalization there are American stores and items everywhere. In many places in the region you can find NIKEs or Coca Cola. Many cities are becoming large metropolitan areas.
What does Islam say about terrorism?

“O people! Your God is one and your forefather (Adam) is one. An Arab is not better than a non-Arab and a non-Arab is not better than an Arab, and a red (i.e. white tinged with red) person is not better than a black person and a black person is not better than a red person.” -Narrated in Mosnad Ahmad, #22978.

• Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy, and forgiveness,

• The vast majority have nothing to do with the violent events some have associated with Muslims.

• If a Muslim were to commit an act of terrorism, this person would be guilty of violating the laws of Islam.
**KEY TERMS**

**ISIS** Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

**ISIL** Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, meaning the whole eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. This includes Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel and Jordan

**Islamists** - Ultraconservative Muslims who prefer a religion-based state which is conservatively based on the Quran and strict enforcement of Islam within the legal system.  

**Shari’a** - Means “the correct path” within Islam and the Quran
What does Jihad Really mean?

.....It means “Inner Struggle” it is defined by Muslims as the struggle in ones self to get closer to god and self actualization.
What is the Taliban?

• Created in 1979
• Originally called the Mujahedeen.
• Funded by the U.S. in the amount of $3 billion
• Logistical and military planning, military hardware.
• “Talib” means student, Taliban means men and women students (of Islam) originally seen as a unifying political movement to support religious laws, and fight against oppression.
• The Unites States and Pakistan contributed to the formation of Taliban.
Al-Qaeda

- Meaning “The Base”
- Logistical network to support Muslims fighting against The Soviet Union
- Under the patronage of the Taliban militia.
- Al-Qaeda received U.S. funding, weapons, and training during and after the Soviet-Afghan war (Britannica, 2016).
There is a lot we may not know about cultures of the Middle East

Some Things to be Aware of: Our culture is very different
Cultural Norms

• Thumbs up is like giving the middle finger.

• You are not supposed to show the soles of your feet it is considered disrespectful and dirty.

• People do not like hugging and touching as much in the Middle East. Personal space is recognized.

• Do not flirt, hit-on, touch, hug or talk in private with women. IT COULD ENDANGER THEIR SAFETY!
The relationships in the eastern cultures are family centric.
Where Does One Draw the Line?

Allowed

Not Allowed
In the core of Islamic beliefs, they believe other religions share the same god.

Christianity and Judaism, and Islam are all together under one god.

“Say (O Muslims), we believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus, we make no distinction between them, and Him we have submitted (in Islam).”

(Surah 2, Al-Baqarah, V. 136)
Respecting people who might have less power, class, or resources is heavily emphasized in the religious texts of the region.
The idea of social justice is mentioned in the Quran more than 28 times.

It is a main feature of the religion. Within the texts, Muslims are instructed to practice justice as part of their daily lives (Sage 2012).
What is Aleppo?
In the Middle East social work as a profession has an advantage.

Contribute to social welfare
Give donations
Support the poor
Help one’s neighbor
How social work can help

• Baseline for a welfare state

• Every human being takes part in helping each other

• More encompassing and well utilized tools, and techniques for those in the region.

• Levels of responsibility
Social intervention in the Middle East focuses on a few objectives:

• Helping clients to enhance their relationship with Allah, or other spirituality which will enhance self-actualization.

• Helping clients to satisfy their own needs

• Helping clients to enhance their social roles, especially roles that relate to the problem at hand.

• Supporting clients to resolve conflicts and misunderstandings that influence social interactions.
There is a need to include Middle Eastern and Islamic instructions into the social work curriculum.

Many countries have education programs some are: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Sudan, Oman.
There is political conflict in many areas of the Middle East. To delve into that is an entire dissertation all together. But I would like to briefly focus on this situation:
Because of its Geographic location Palestine has been in the crossfire of many wars and occupations (Abu-Ras 2013).

Relief, refugee, and social organizations include: The Red Cross, American Friends Service Committee, The United Nations, Palestinian center for Human Rights, The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)
“The best way to defeat a population is to demonize them. That’s why Trump can say ‘Ban all Muslims’. We have been demonized already.”

-Sr. Sanaa Nadim

“People of the Middle East built great things. They invented Algebra, and mapped the stars which led Christopher Columbus here. They created the advancement of the world we live in... However we do not see the other side of our globalization”   -Sr. Sanaa Nadim
Core values of Islam:
Equality
Social Justice
Human Rights
The poor and dependents
Fair treatment of women
Social welfare (Social Responsibility)
Charity

Core Competencies CSWE:
Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

NASW Code of Ethics
Service
Social Justice
Dignity and Worth of the Person
Importance of Human Relationships
Integrity
Competence
As social work professionals what can we do?

- Follow ALL Core Competencies
- Utilize the entire Code of Ethics, especially Competence, Dignity and worth of a person, and importance of Human relationships
- Understand difference in culture, and respect that
- Educate ourselves and others
- Ask questions, and reflect on our own cultural bias
- Visit or volunteer at a Mosque, and ask how one can help
- Understand the media and its potential negative influence
- Practice compassion
- Advocate for human rights and policy change
- Bring up the issue to others
- Visit with more Middle Eastern clients and populations
- **TALK ABOUT IT!!!!**
• **Domestic Harmony Foundation** (DHF), community based not-for-profit organization located in Long Island, NY providing services in response to the social, emotional, and psychological needs of a growing population of South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Muslim women and children, due to domestic violence and other violations of basic human rights.

• **Islamic centers** Most are privately funded, and are a resource to communities. Not only do they provide financial, emotional, academic, legal, and religious services, they help advance social policies and services within the community.

• **The Waqf Endowment** Wealthy family created this organization under their family name centuries ago. This organization supports orphans, travelers, and the disabled.
• Suffolk / Nassau Migrant Education Outreach Program –Eastern Suffolk BOCES promotes the success of migrant-eligible youth in partnership with migrant parents and youth, schools and community members. The long-term goal is for families and youth to independently pursue their academic goals and graduate from high school.
Voices of NY. The site curates the best journalistic work being produced by scores of community and ethnic publications and where necessary translates the work into English. The audience for “Voices” includes mainstream and immigrant journalists, advocacy groups, city and government agencies, students, and individuals seeking a broader perspective on the news. As a testament to its global reach, “Voices” content is viewed through browsers from 134 countries.
Associations and Resources

• ICNA – Islamic Circle of North America – New Hyde Park, Nassau County Community Center and Mosque

• CAIR - Council on American-Islamic Relations

Knowledge

Education
Solution
Analysis
Information
Experience
Learning
THANK YOU!!!
References
References Continued


