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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Islamophobia, shame, and the collapse of Muslim identities

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Abstract

In this paper, I explore the impact of Islamophobia on contemporary Muslim identities. I examine how Islamophobia and the question of Muslim identities appear in the cultural uses of symbols and media discourses in the West and in the psychoanalysis of a Lebanese-American woman who identified as a "secular Muslim." The paper discusses how Islamophobia, through its creation and propagation of Muslim stereotypes, flattens the depth, diversity, and historicity of Muslim identities; it examines, as well, how Muslims internalize these stereotypes. This internalization and the direct experiences with injurious speech, discriminatory acts and hate crimes may lead to shame. Driven by shame, Muslims may sever the tie to their cultural background or idealize their Islamic religion or culture, perceived to be located in the space and time of the "glorious Islamic past," as in the case of Islamic fundamentalism. While these strategies may protect Muslims from their painful shame, they risk collapsing their identities. I also discuss some of the social defenses employed by Muslim communities facing Islamophobia, which may reinforce the stereotypes they are desperately trying to fight.

KEYWORDS

Islam, Islamophobia, Muslim culture, Muslim identity, shame, stereotypes

1 | INTRODUCTION

On the day following Donald Trump's inauguration, Dr Yasser Ad-Dab'bagh kindly invited me to contribute a paper to this special issue on Islamophobia. As I started to reflect on my psychoanalytic understanding of Islamophobia, I found myself pondering a more personal question. What would it be like for me, a Lebanese-American woman psychoanalyst, to write about Islamophobia at *this* particular time in history?

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For the past few years, I have been interested in studying and writing psychoanalytically about Islamic and Arabic cultures, taking special interest in understanding the formation of Arab identities from the time of the Arab reformation movements, in the mid-nineteenth century, onward. During this process, I became aware of the challenge of studying one's culture at a time when that culture was being attacked from within, by extremism and militarism, and from without, by prejudice. With the recent rise of terrorism committed by Muslims and the terrorism-focused lens through which the West has been analyzing Islamic cultures, I became concerned about the temptation of looking into Islamic and Arabic cultures solely through that narrow lens, where everything I studied had to be reconciled with current political buzz words: terrorism, Islamophobia, Islamic fundamentalism, and so on. My concern emerged after observing how my conversations with acquaintances about my topic of study almost inevitably led to questions about its relevance to recent Islamic violence. While this question is valid and important, making it the sole focus of studying Islamic cultures not only risked spoiling the pleasure of deeply knowing those cultures but it also risked interpreting past events only through the lens of the present, a dangerous endeavor. Now I have been specifically asked to write about Islamophobia. This presents both an opportunity and a new threat to the creative space that I have been slowly constructing.

As I further explored my feelings about writing on Islamophobia, I also recognized my ambivalence about the prospect of facing the onslaught of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab prejudice in the process of researching the subject, especially given the toxic political context in which I wrote this paper – Trump's presidency, the two Muslim travel bans, the anti-immigration executive orders, and the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant hate crimes across the United States and Europe. Of course, I knew about anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hate; but did I want to read the gory details of this hatred, summarize the painful stories of its victims, and quote its vitriolic discourse? This brought to mind Adrienne Harris' feelings about having to write, as a woman, about misogyny, inevitably re-traumatizing herself and her readers (Harris, 2003). “It is impossible not to recoil and feel unsettled. The words will not stay simply symbolic. Primary process leaks out. This word, my word, that is ‘cunt,’ the one intended for me, is a word I absorb somatically as well as mentally. Woman hating enters the body. But of course we are supposed to feel these strange affects, these frissons of shame and rage and (alarmingly) excitement” (Harris, 2003, pp. 249–250).

To write or talk *critically* about Islamophobia and its impact on Muslim identities entailed taking other risks as well. On the one hand, in challenging stereotypes, one fears provoking hostile reactions from a dominant culture that feels threatened when asked to look into its own prejudices (Gullestad, 2006, p. 11; Sheehi, 2011, pp. 122–123). I am referring here to my understanding of prejudice as the act of keeping at bay feared aspects of one's psyche (individual and collective) by projecting them onto the “other” who becomes feared and hated (Steiner, 2016). On the other hand, to *critically* analyze Muslims' reactions to Islamophobia might risk betraying a community suffering under attack or risk inadvertently providing fodder to extremist right propaganda, reinforcing already existing prejudice. My concern seemed to echo similar ones reported in the academic literature. Kalin (2011) quoted a Muslim religious scholar's refusal to address issues of extremism in Muslim communities, “for fear that what I write, especially these days, could be misinterpreted or even deliberately explained to serve purposes contrary to my intentions” (p. 17). These concerns raise a serious question: how do we write about a culture, particularly a culture marginalized by racism, capitalism, or any form of hegemony, without colluding with that culture's social defenses and without essentializing or generalizing any negative attributions we identify in that culture? It is in the context of these dilemmas that I would like to explore Islamophobia and its impact on Muslim identities.

One final note: writing this paper was a lonely experience for me. This loneliness was partly due to the fact that we psychoanalysts have tended to stay away from studying political and social phenomena (Auestad, 2014, p. 250; Layton, Hollander, & Gutwill, 2006, pp. 2–4; Segal, 1987, p. 10). My loneliness was also related to the fact that very few psychoanalysts have undertaken the study of Muslim cultures: there was nobody in my personal psychoanalytic community who was knowledgeable on this topic with whom I could discuss my ideas. I hope this special issue will mark a step in breaking our psychoanalytic silence.

2 | ON THE STUDY OF IDENTITY

In this paper, I explore the impact of Islamophobia on contemporary Muslim identities. My understanding of identity, including Muslim identities, is that it involves holding the dialectic tension between the unique subjectivity of the individual and his or her cultural context, which includes others and material objects (e.g., landscape, physical setting) in his or her world and prevailing cultural discourses (oppressive and otherwise).[1]

For a healthy development of identity, it is important for an individual holding that tension, between subjectivity and cultural context, to feel the freedom to access his or her inner world: thoughts, feelings, intuitions, internalized experiences, including micro-cultural experiences (with family, friends, etc.), and macro-cultural ones (cultural traditions, arts, cuisine, etc.). It is also important for that individual to feel the freedom to access cultural elements in his or her environment (e.g., religious sites, cultural ceremonies, etc.). When aspects of the individual's inner world are inaccessible to him or her (e.g., as a result of having a family who does not allow angry feelings or being in a society that discriminates against certain racial or religious groups and practices), those aspects may become foreclosed, leading to a collapse in the individual's identity.

In my paper, I examine how Islamophobia may lead to a collapsed Muslim identity. I discuss one possible mechanism underlying this collapse: that is the activation of shame in Muslim individuals and communities and how this shame may impact the formation of Muslim identities. While my focus in this particular paper is on shame, it is by no means the sole affective experience that may impact Muslim identities under Islamophobia. In another paper (Sadek, in process), I study the role of fear, terror, anger, and rage.

In my analysis, I examine how Islamophobia and the question of Muslim identities appear in cultural uses of symbols and media discourses. I also present clinical material of my psychoanalysis of a Lebanese-American woman, who identified as a “secular Muslim”, focusing on the ways in which identity conflicts emerged and became material for exploration in the course of her analysis. As I embark on this journey, I am mindful that psychoanalysis is only a theory of mind. While it informs our understanding of the individual and collective psyches, it is not all encompassing and, thus, is inherently limited in studying complex cultural phenomena. The results of my analysis are therefore but one piece of a large and complex puzzle.

3 | DEFINING ISLAMOPHOBIA

Before I discuss the mechanisms underlying the collapse of Muslim identity formation under Islamophobia, I would like to briefly describe the phenomenon of Islamophobia and later define what I mean by a collapsed Muslim identity. In this paper, I do not much discuss the causality of Islamophobia, which deserves its own space and stands as a project for another paper. It is worth mentioning, nonetheless, that there is tendency to perceive Islamophobia as the West's fear-based reaction to Islamic terrorism, particularly following the events of 9/11. Many scholars, however, have shown that prejudice against Muslims preceded Islamic terrorism by centuries (Itani, 2011; Massad, 2007; Said, 1978), as I will also show later in this paper.

Using the term “Islamophobia” to describe prejudice against Muslims has generated controversy among many scholars of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (Cesari, 2011; Halliday, 1999; Kaya, 2014). Does the term “Islamophobia” accurately represent the phenomenon of prejudice against Muslims? This caution is warranted for several reasons.

The term “Islamophobia” presupposes that the prejudice is against Islam, a non-living thing while the real victims of Islamophobia are living people of flesh and blood. Of course, this is how prejudice works, dehumanizing its victims by not addressing them as people. Another problematic in the term “Islamophobia” is the assumption that prejudice against Muslims is aimed at their religion, Islam. Discrimination against Muslims may, however, be based on their race, ethnicity, cultural differences, socio-economics, or the mere fact that they are immigrants (Cesari, 2011, 2014). Scholars on race, gender, and class have long argued that the lines between the ostensibly neat categories of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and class are often blurred. “Can we assume … that a racial identity is homogeneous, that blacks and whites of all classes and both genders experience race in the same way?” (Layton, 2006, p. 238). While US Muslims tend to fare well in terms of their education level and socio-economics (Johnson, 2011), Muslims in many European countries are considered “part of the European underclass,” making class-based contempt one possible underlying reason behind the discrimination they face in these countries (Cesari, 2011, p. 25). For example, in England, more than two-thirds of Britons of Bangladeshi and Pakistani descent, who constitute the largest groups of Muslims, live in low-income housing compared to 2 percent of white Britons (Cesari, 2011, p. 27). In Germany, the unemployment rate among those of Turkish origins, the largest group of Muslims, was 21 percent compared to 8 percent among other Germans in 2003 (Cesari, 2011, pp. 25–26). One could also argue that the recent prejudice against Muslim refugees both in the United States and Europe might be partly a class prejudice, as many of the refugees, even those who come from middle-class backgrounds, fall in the low-income or no-income category as they enter their host countries.

The majority of Muslims in France and the UK are immigrants from former colonies (North Africans in France and South Asians in the UK) who arrived in Europe in the middle of the twentieth century (Cesari, 2011). Discrimination against Muslims in those countries might involve a postcolonial dynamic, with disowned shame and guilt of former colonizers projected onto Muslim immigrants.

“Islamophobia is not racially blind” (Kalin, 2011, p. 11). The majority of Muslims in the United States are of African-American (25 percent), South-Asian (30 percent) – from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India – or Arab (25 percent) descent (Sirin et al., 2008). The remainder of Muslim-Americans are from other diverse ethnic backgrounds: Iran and to a lesser extent Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central and Eastern Europe. A small proportion consists of Latino and White converts (Sirin et al., 2008). As diverse as the Muslim-American population seems to be, it is mostly brown-faced; and given the history of racism in the West, attitudes towards Islam might, therefore, be conflated with those towards race (Davids, 2009, p. 175). The racism in Islamophobia is not restricted, however, to prejudice against Muslims as “colored people;” it also includes prejudice against Arabs as a specific race. Muslims are often conflated with Arabs although not all Arabs are Muslim and the majority of Muslims are not Arabs. Arabs are often stereotyped as “backward and violent.” Sometimes prejudice against Arabs seems to target not the religion of Islam but certain Arabs' lifestyles (e.g., some Arabs being desert dwellers and thus deemed “backward”). At other times, anti-Arab sentiment has taken religious undertones just as anti-Muslim stereotypes have taken anti-Arab undertones. For example, in one American cartoon of 2007, a Taliban man was depicted wearing a gutra, a cotton headscarf worn by men in some Arab countries but not in Afghanistan, thus conflating anti-Muslim and anti-Arab stereotypes (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2011, pp. 194–195).

Prejudice against Muslims might also betray hatred toward immigrants and foreigners in general (i.e., xenophobia). The recent rise in discrimination against Muslims in Europe and the United States was not exclusive to Muslims but extended to other groups as well: Latinos/Latinas (e.g., building the wall with Mexico was the earliest recruitment lure for many Trump supporters), the Roma population in some European countries (Erös, 2014, p. 33) and Eastern Europeans in the UK, particularly Polish immigrants who along with South-Asian Muslim immigrants were the main targets in the Brexit vote (O'Neill, 2016).

Also, some themes of anti-Muslim propaganda seemed similar to those of anti-Semitism. Muslims are often conflated with Arabs; and given that both Arabs and Jews are Semites, it may not be surprising to find similarities in the signifiers used in the propaganda against Muslims, Arabs, and Jews. Arabs and Muslims have been described as “masses” “invading” or “raping” Europe. For example, a Polish magazine cover in 2016 read “The Islamic rape of Europe”[2] (Tharoor, 2016). Similarly, “The Jews, according to Hitler, raped mother Germany” (Erös, 2014, p. 31). Cesari (2011) highlighted the West's exaggerated focus on repressed sexuality, honor killings, and sacrifice feasts[3] when describing Muslims and Arabs (p. 34). Similarly, Erös (2014) noted how, “sexual repression, the horror and, at the same time, a secret desire for sexual abuse, are implied in the ancient accusations of ritual murders committed by Jews for ritual purposes” (p. 29). These similarities in stereotyping Arabs and Jews are not a recent phenomenon. Edward Said declared in 1978 that “anti-Semitism and, as I have discussed it in its Islamic branch, Orientalism resemble each other very closely. [This] is a historical, cultural, and political truth that needs only to be mentioned to an Arab Palestinian for its irony to be perfectly understood” (pp. 27–28).

The problematic that surrounds the term “Islamophobia” regarding its conflation of religion, race, and ethnicity cannot be fully blamed on the term itself or the phenomenon of prejudice alone. Much confusion indeed surrounds the terms “Islam” and “Muslim” (Ahmed, 2016; Massad, 2015). Is Islam a religion, a culture, or a civilization? If individuals identify themselves as Muslim, do they mean they are practicing believers, non-practicing believers, or “secular Muslims?” Who gets to decide what the answers should be: The Muslim individual, the Islamic institutes (the Azhar of Egypt, the Hawza of Iran, the Wahhabi of Saudi Arabia, etc.), the scholars, or DAESH?[4] How does being Muslim compare to being Christian, which invariably means to have faith, or to being Jewish, which may not imply having faith, as many secular Jews identify as Jewish? These questions are at the heart of an ongoing and unresolved debate among scholars and Muslims themselves (Ahmed, 2016; Massad, 2015). Although the debate about defining Islam is an important project, it is well beyond the scope of my paper. My point in raising these questions is not to endorse the arguments proposed by the scholars Ahmed and Massad, some of which seem controversial. My point is to emphasize that in our attempt to understand Islamophobia and its impact on Muslim identities, it is essential to keep in mind the complexity of the racial, ethnic, class, and religious undertones that are often conflated in the terms “Islamophobia”, “Muslim” and “Islam.” For example, when the term “Muslim” is applied (particularly in Western discourses), it often overshadows racial, ethnic or national elements of an individual's identity, which might feel more important to that individual than the “Islamic” elements, however we define Islam. Such conflation seems to have obliged some non-religious Muslim-born individuals to identify, not without conflict, as “secular Muslims,” as I will show in the clinical vignette. In order to attend to these complexities, in some sections of this paper I talk about Islam as a religion while in other sections I discuss the lives and identities of Muslim-born individuals from a broader cultural perspective.

4 | ISLAMOPHOBIA AND COLLAPSED MUSLIM IDENTITY

As I mentioned earlier, identity develops within the dialectic tension between the subjectivity of the individual and his or her cultural context. The multiple creative ways with which an individual, or a community, works out these tensions allow for a colorful tapestry of identities within a given culture. As such, each culture is inevitably diverse. Of course, the range and nature of diversity change over time and thus are historically contextualized. The diversity I am referring to in my paper includes religious and cultural diversities. In some sections I discuss Islamic religious diversity while in other sections I discuss the cultural diversity of individuals of Muslim background (e.g., diversity in relation to gender roles, lifestyles and interests, which might be related not to the religion of Islam but to racial or ethnic particularities). There are many other aspects of cultural diversity that I will not address, such as diversity in the arts; in literature genres; in cuisine; in linguistic modes of expression particular to a region or class; and in “taste” of all kinds.

As an example of diversity: in more patriarchal cultures, one finds many stories of women who are self-assured, assertive, and able to swim against predominant currents of conventional gender roles (Abou Mrad, 2017; Afshar, 1996; Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, 1996). Similarly, in more progressive cultures, one encounters many women whose voices have been suffocated by their (and others') convictions of female inferiority, narratives that any US psychoanalyst can attest to. The right extremist movements sweeping through Europe and the United States over the past few years attest to the rising religiosity and conservatism in the “secular” West. For instance, the US Attorney General, at the time of writing, Jeff Sessions described the separation of church and state as “unhistorical” and “unconstitutional” (Sydell, 2017). My aim is not to deny the fact that Muslim cultures struggle with significant women and other human rights issues and rising extremism. My point here is to show that cultures, all cultures, are polyvalent and complex, a prelude to my discussion on the dangers of denying this cultural complexity.

It follows that a collapsed identity is an identity (individual or collective) in which diversity and depth are denied and flattened. A collapsed identity is also ahistorical: it is (mis)perceived to have always been this way across time and space. What does a collapsed Muslim identity look like? It is a stereotypical, monovalent, and bland identity profile in which men are invariably conservatively religious, authoritarian, sexually aggressive, and prone to violence while women are invariably veiled, passive, submissive, and sexually repressed. This monolithic profile, which suggests two key elements – backwardness and danger – sometimes presents itself in a polarized form, categorizing Muslims into "good Muslims" or "bad Muslims." The "bad Muslims" fit the monolithic profile noted earlier while the "good Muslims" are "just like us," whoever we as the dominant culture perceive ourselves to be, thus denying the "good Muslims" their differences and particularities.

The monolithic and polarized profiles might coexist in the same prejudiced mind and speech. In an interview on November 14, 2006, Glenn Beck of CNN Headline News asked the first Muslim Congressman, Keith Ellison, the following: "No offense, and I know Muslims. I like Muslims. I've been to mosques. I really don't believe that Islam is a religion of evil. I – you know, I think it's being hijacked, quite frankly … I have been nervous about this interview with you, because what I feel like saying is, 'Sir, prove to me that you are not working with our enemies.' And I know you're not. I'm not accusing you of being an enemy, but that's the way I feel, and I think a lot of Americans will feel that way" (Beck, 2006). A couple of months later, Beck tried to "refine" his position on Muslims when challenged by John Cook of Radar online (Huffington Post, 2007). Beck's attempt at "refining" his bigotry only added insult to injury by shifting his prejudice from a monolithic to a polarized discourse. Here is the exchange:

> JOHN COOK: You're a Mormon. Explain to me the difference between you asking Keith Ellison that question and me asking you to prove you're not a polygamist.
> GLENN BECK: It was a poorly worded question, and if I could take anything back I would take back the wording of that question. Because what the question really was is: Do you understand that there is a feeling among Americans when you are faced with a Muslim, especially a Muslim who is, in my view, soft on military action, that – okay, *are you a part of the good Muslims or the bad Muslims*? (Huffington Post, 2007, emphasis added)

These monolithic and polarized stereotypes permeate Western media, literary and visual arts, and general public discourses (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2011; Said, 1978). Cesari (2011) emphasized the "sensationalism" in many of the stories circulating in the West portraying Muslims almost exclusively in terms of honor killings, female genital mutilation, terrorism, and Islamic fundamentalism (p. 34). Positive aspects of Islam and Muslim lives, including the many stories of successful integration of Muslims in the West, are often omitted from these narratives and are thus invisible to Westerners (Cesari, 2011; Kalin, 2011). Kalin (2011) writes, "the cultural and artistic life of most Muslim countries, for instance, gets very little coverage in major media outlets in Europe and the United States" (p. 14). All of this leaves the impression that nothing but trouble exists in Muslim countries. This is akin to a certain country describing US culture by airing sensational stories of every gun violence crime in the United States and every problematic intervention (military and otherwise) by the US government in third world countries and nothing else.

Implicit bias against Muslims exists among Westerners with a wide range of political viewpoints (Almond, 2007; Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2011; Massad, 2015; Sheehi, 2011). Auestad (2014) observed how "hostility towards immigrants and refugees and people conceived of as 'others' is no longer restricted to extremists, but taken up and endorsed by large swathes of the political centre. In Young-Bruehl's terms, some social defences have become so 'normal' as to have become unnoticeable to many" (pp. XIX–XX). Even well-intentioned narratives about Muslims tend to carry a monovalent stamp. For example, in a New York Times article announcing Nike's new athletic female attire for Hijabi women,[5] the article's title betrayed a "veiled" stereotype: "Nike Reveals the 'Pro Hijab' for *Muslim Athletes*" (Safronova, 2017, italics added). By naming the target customers "Muslim Athletes" or "Female Muslim Athletes," as she did later in the article, the author implied that all Muslim women wear the hijab, reinforcing the stereotype. Although it is admirable that Nike was providing Muslim Hijabi women a representation, a more accurate description should have been "Female Muslim athletes who wear the hijab" or "Hijabi Muslim athletes."

This is not an argument about semantics alone. In an effort to defend Muslims against the tide of Islamophobia, well-meaning US activists have used a number of visual signifiers, which risked narrowing the scope of Muslim identity, thus reinforcing the stereotypes they claimed to be fighting. One finds such an example in the pervasive portrayals of Muslim men praying or Muslim women wearing the hijab as emblems for Muslims used in demonstrations against Trump's Muslim travel ban. One popular signifier for Muslim women involved a poster of a woman wearing the US flag as a headscarf (Helmore, 2017).

In a similar vein, Dalal (2012) pointed to how Jihadists, a minority of Muslims, "come to stand for all followers of Islam" in both right extremist and some liberal discourses (p. 208). "Any criticism and dissenting opinion regarding the world view of the Jihadist activates the liberal taboo against racism (because to criticize one is to criticize all), and silence follows. Let me underline this point: it is because we are unable or unwilling to discriminate between varieties of Islamic belief and practice that we end up by homogenizing them, and so either idealizing them all, or damning them all … To repeat once again, what is needed is more discrimination, not less. Quite simply, 'they' are not all the same, and neither are 'we'. I need to work hard to continually resist the collapse of categories. I need to be able to discriminate between the murderous Islamo-fascist and Mr Khan, the shopkeeper down the road" (pp. 208–209). Obama's refusal to use the term "radical Islam" might constitute one example of the "liberal taboo" that Dalal warned against. While it is admirable that Obama's refusal to use that term was intended to avoid prejudice, radical Islam does exist; and if we cannot acknowledge Islamic radicalism then we run the risk of painting all Muslims as not different from the radicals.

Academic sociological studies have tended to use similar stereotypes when exploring the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim identities (Kunst, Tajamal, Sam, & Ulleberg, 2012; Sirin et al., 2008). These researchers invariably defined Muslims as conservative practicing religious Muslims and recruited their participants from mosques and Islamic centers without even accounting for their country of origin in studying their sense of Muslim identity, thus conflating religion, race, and ethnicity. One group of researchers, Sirin et al. (2008), acknowledged this problem, "not measuring country of origin identification in addition to Muslim and American identifications may have limited our ability to fully understand how these young people form their identities as Muslim immigrants in the US" (p. 276).

Even psychoanalytic communities have not been exempt from this stereotyping and prejudice against Muslims. Gohar Homayounpour (2012), an Iranian psychoanalyst practicing in Tehran, described how a Bostonian psychoanalyst stated at one of her presentations, "but I do not think that Iranians can free-associate" (p. XXI)! In their analyses of the French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva's writings in which she expressed her thoughts on Islam and Muslim cultures, Almond (2007) and Sutton (2013) noted her lack of appreciation of diversity and historical contexts in the Muslim world, which seemed to exist in her mind as a uniform entity cut off by space and time. What seems puzzling about Kristeva's thoughts on Islam is her proven capacity for depth and appreciation of complexity even in a few of her comments on Muslims and Islam, which makes her prejudice all the more disturbing. For example, Kristeva (2009) stressed the importance of possessing a first-hand knowledge of Islam and Muslim culture in order for someone to render an informed opinion about them, citing her own limitations in that regard, "how [to] venture into this vast domain without knowing the language and lacking all but secondhand information" (p. 45)? On another occasion, Kristeva (2009) acknowledged the complex socio-political dynamics underlying the violence committed by North African youths of Muslim background in the suburbs of Paris, which often gets reduced to Muslims' "inherent" inability to integrate in Western cultures: "the crisis of our 'suburbs' is not religious … On the political level, this need of ideals, of recognition and respect crystallizes into a single battle, and it is a huge one, considering the suffering it reveals and the extent of the changes needed: *the battle against discrimination*" (p. 22, italics added).

This level of sophistication in thinking about Muslim cultures seemed to disappear, however, in Kristeva's many other statements about Muslims, marked by stereotypes and a complete absence of any primary resource on the subject matter.[6] Here she is, responding to a question on whether Islam shares the trend of monotheistic religions: "I fear, however, that certain distinctive features of Islam … make an Islamic theo-*logy* improbable if not impossible and, similarly, any 'discussion' between Sunnis and Shi-ites [sic], not to mention with the other two monotheisms. These distinctive features also handicap a possible opening of Islam toward the ethical and political problems raised by the freedoms, full of risks, of the men and women of the third millennium and by the different ways of thinking in confrontation on these subjects" (p. 47). To this, Sutton (2013) aptly commented: "No longer are we referring only to fundamentalism, or to certain sects of Islam – the Islam in question here is an entire, singular entity, all of which is deemed incapable of facing the ethical and political problems that arise in the third millennium, when people are free" (pp. 52–53). We may glimpse a hint of what may underlie Kristeva's difficulty with Islam in her glorification of Christianity's superiority (or the “Genius of Catholicism,” p. 63) climaxed in the following statement: “Christ leads to Mozart: ... Christianity refines suffering into joy. Listen to the ‘Miserere Nobis’ of the Mass in C Minor: the sacrifice resolves itself into serenity, then ecstasy. What an unexpected filiation! *Allah's madmen, among others, should give this some thought*” (Kristeva, 2009, p. 55, emphasis added).

The issue with Kristeva's comments was not her critique of Muslim cultures, as there is enough to critique, but the fact that in her critique she flattened out the complexity and depth of Muslim lives and cultures while lacking, in her own report, any first-hand knowledge of the subject matter, the importance of which she herself had aptly emphasized, as noted earlier. Kristeva's blanketed statements on Islam and Muslims perhaps speak to the power of prejudice, which may knock the reason out of a sophisticated theorist of her caliber, especially a theorist well known for her important work on the “abject” and its role in identity formation.

It is not only Islamophobia that burdens Muslims with a monolithic identity. One finds a mirror copy in Muslim fundamentalists' (and Jihadists') ideology, which, like that of the Islamophobe, presents a universal image of what a Muslim should be: a highly conservative, religious Muslim. Both report on how the Qur'an said “this” or “that” to prove their claims, taking the text literally outside of its historical and geographical contexts. Both polarize their view of the “other” as either good (“good Muslims” who are “just like us” for the Islamophobe or simply “Muslims” for the Muslim fundamentalist) or bad (“bad Muslims” for the Islamophobe or “infidels” for the Muslim fundamentalist). Both decontextualize narratives and conflate religion with race, ethnicity, and class. Muslim fundamentalists and Jihadists dismiss the racial and ethnic particularities of Muslim communities and instead promote a pan-Islamic identity.

This monovalent identity profile, whether enforced by Islamophobia or Islamic fundamentalism, stands in sharp contrast to the rich and diverse narratives of Muslims one encounters in daily interactions with them, in the literature and arts of Muslim countries, and in the privacy of our psychoanalytic consulting rooms.

5 | A PSYCHOANALYTIC NARRATIVE

Layal was a 42-year-old Lebanese-American woman when she entered analysis with me to work on her parenting of her four-year-old daughter. Layal, a highly articulate college professor, had immigrated to the United States in her early thirties to pursue a career in academic research. Soon after immigrating, she married an American man of Arab descent, whom she experienced as loving and supportive of her and her decision to seek analysis. Conflicts between her professional ambition and the demands of parenting her four-year-old daughter permeated the first year of her analysis. In the course of exploring these conflicts, themes of early emotional deprivations emerged along with the strong belief in self-reliance at the expense of emotional intimacy, a compromise Layal expected of her four-year-old daughter. For many years in Layal's early and middle childhood, her parents worked long hours to secure their three children in a prestigious private school, thought to be a guarantee for a secure future. Layal's mother worked as a secretary at a private school, which partially subsidized her children's education. Layal's father owned a neighborhood grocery store. Her Mother also worked at the store in the evenings. Although Layal felt her parents' genuine love for her, their absence, both emotional and physical, was palpable, leaving her with the conviction that the emotional availability of others was not to be trusted.

In the course of the analysis, it appeared that Layal's fierce independence and ambition might also have been a proxy realization of her mother's ambition. Worried that further education might spoil their daughter's chances of getting married, Layal's maternal grandparents had forced her mother to leave school after completing ninth grade and soon arranged her marriage to their friends' son. Layal's mother submitted to her parents' plan but vowed not to transmit it to her own children. She deflected many “suitors,” who were interested in marrying Layal, telling them that Layal was interested in pursuing her education. Both parents showcased their pride in their children's academic performances without micromanaging their academics. Layal, thus, grew up with the notion that a woman should secure her career and claim her own voice. For Layal, this belief nursed her ambition and self-assuredness but was also a burden, akin to a transgenerational transfer of errand. Layal had come to recognize the tension created in her by this message from her mother and to negotiate a path between ambition and closeness in a way that felt comfortable to her.

Earlier in her analysis, Layal had mentioned in passing that she was a "secular Muslim." For a few years, the religion of Islam rarely entered our sessions. Her cultural background, however, featured heavily in our explorations of her early life experiences and the dynamics in her family; in her sense of malaise and longing for the cosmopolitan life of Beirut; and in her dream life where Beirut featured a great deal. Slowly, as we explored the dynamics of her family, particularly around what she was being asked to carry for her family and the women in her family, we both felt struck by how much she did not know about her early life and ancestry: her parents' early life experiences, their early experiences in the marriage and in raising their children, her hometowns – her parents came from different regions in Lebanon. During this period of the analysis, for example, Layal learned from her mother that at the time of her parents' marriage (in the 1940s), in the small village where her mother grew up, some women who protested their arranged marriages either suicided or were beaten into obedience after their failed escapes, which made her mother's "submission" to her parents' arranged marriage plan seem like a wise compromise.

Layal also realized how much she did not know about Arabic and Islamic history. Although she had attended a well-known Lebanese private school and she seemed well educated, including fluency in four languages, Layal knew little about the history of Arabic and Islamic cultures and little about her parents' religion. As Layal's conflicts about parenting her daughter began to resolve, she became interested in learning about her cultural heritage, including wanting to know more about Islam. At 43, and for the first time in her life, Layal started reading the Qur'an. Her interest did not seem to be in wanting to claim Islam as a religion, as she remained secular. Her interest stemmed from her curiosity about understanding her collective history and narratives that shaped her subjectivity.

It was then that Islam and cultural identity entered more fully into the analysis. Layal had lived most of her childhood and young adulthood in a working class, diverse with a Muslim majority, neighborhood in West Beirut in the 1960s through the early 1980s. Although her parents were pious Shia Muslims, who practiced the basic tenets of Islam in their daily lives, they rarely discussed religion with their children. They never instructed Layal or her two siblings, an older brother and a younger sister, to pray or fast. Layal recounted how her mother laughed when Layal came home excited to tell her mother that she had learned how to pray from a friend at school. The mother felt amused by the fact that Layal had learned to pray "the Sunni way" from her Sunni male friend. Mother did not "correct" her, but seemed happy to know that her daughter was praying. After a few months of experimenting with praying and fasting during Ramadan when she was 12 years old, Layal came across writings on secular political movements and critique of religion. At that point, she gave up religion altogether. She was 13. Her parents did not seem to have objected to her decision to become "secular." This freedom, to practice or not practice religion, seemed to be the result of her parents' pragmatic outlook on life and a relaxed societal approach to religious matters. The freedom in the family paralleled leftist and secular political movements in Lebanon in the 1960s through the mid-1980s, as in many third world countries, including several majority Muslim countries in the Middle East, central Asia, and North Africa. This political environment sometimes tried to distance itself from the religion and culture of Islam (Benslama, 2009, p. 1), a stance that perhaps proved problematic (Sadek, in process).

Layal told me that in Lebanon, she did not identify primarily as a Muslim but rather as a Lebanese-Arab. Like with her family, religion did not seem to have occupied much space with her friends, most of whom were born Muslims (both Shia and Sunni) whose religiosity (or lack thereof) seemed quite diverse. Layal and her friends, even those who seemed religious, partied, had boyfriends, and drank alcohol. Some of them engaged in premarital sexual relations with their boyfriends. The children's lifestyles seemed largely to have been granted parental approval.

Layal's narrative was familiar to me, as I had grown up in Beirut, albeit in a different neighborhood, in the 1970s through the 1990s. Many of my Muslim friends identified as non-believers. Those who were believers either did not practice their religion or seemed diverse in their practices. Some did not feel the need to pray or fast during Ramadan. For them, "practicing good deeds" was the best embodiment of Islam. Other believers prayed only during Ramadan. Others yet, prayed daily and fasted during Ramadan but drank alcohol because their interpretation of the Qur'anic prohibition of alcohol rested on alcohol's ability to inhibit reason and knowing God. If one drank alcohol and maintained the ability to know God, some Muslims argued, then; no problem. A lot of women who prayed and fasted did not wear the headscarf. During my elementary through my high school education in Beirut, in the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of my fellow students were Muslim. There were a handful of girls in the neighborhoods I lived in and the schools I attended throughout those years who wore the headscarf. Some of the women who wore the headscarf infused it with their individual fashion style, boasting colorful dresses and make-up, with hijabs leaving an exposed front hairline, which did not seem to risk provoking men's desire. This religious diversity was more pronounced in the cities although some Lebanese villages experienced diverse applications of Islam.

Sometime in the 1980s and 1990s,[7] this landscape started to slowly transform. Although the diversity in practicing, or not practicing the religion of Islam, continued, its range had shrunk. Over the past three decades, I have witnessed increasing religiosity and a restricted range of religious practices in Lebanon: Store closings in the middle of the day on Fridays for Friday prayers and increased celebrations or commemorations of religious events (e.g., Ashura, the birth of the prophet Muhammad). The headscarf, worn in more conservative styles, seems more popular now among girls and women. I hear stories, and see pictures, of similar transformations in other countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (Aryan, 2016; Hadid, 2016). Images and stories contrasting, among many other things, what women looked like "then" (no headscarves or less covering headscarves) and "now" (fully covered) circulate on social and written media, depicting increased religiosity and restricted diversity of religious practices.

This diversity and historicity of Islamic, religious, and cultural, identities challenge the monovalent and ahistorical narrative of Islamophobia (and Islamic fundamentalism). Abu Zaid (1943–2010), a Muslim scholar well known for applying hermeneutics to the study of the Qur'an, once said: "There is no single Islam … There never has been any such thing as a pure, abstract Islam situated above the rough-and-tumble of geography and history … Islam, like all major world religions, expresses itself in a wide variety of ways" (Abu Zaid & Nelson, 2004, pp. XI, 202).

6 | COLLAPSED IDENTITY THROUGH INTERNALIZATION OF STEREOTYPES

As Layal reflected on her cultural history and identity, she started pondering, what role did Islam play in her identity? This question became palpable every time she met new US acquaintances, who, once they learned she was Lebanese, almost always wanted to know whether she was Christian or Muslim. "I don't know why they feel the right to ask that," she complained, "This is so intimate. If a Lebanese asked me this question, they would get lectured at."[8] She told me that over the years in her life in the United States, she had crafted different answers to this question. "First, I used to say, 'I am Muslim,' although I'm not religious. I don't believe in God, Heaven or Hell. I thought they [her American interlocutors] meant to know what my background was. But they would hammer me with stupid questions, 'Do you wear the hijab when you go home? Are you allowed to drive when you visit home?' Why don't they ask me, 'How's life in Lebanon, what do people do in their free time? What does your family do?' Oh, and listen to this. Can you believe what some idiots asked Samar [one of her Lebanese friends]? 'Do you ride camels when you're back home?' Where do they think we live, under a tree?" This reflects ignorance not only about Islam but also about Arabic culture in general.

Layal's frustrations echoed similar sentiments expressed by other Muslims and Non-Muslim Arabs I have encountered in my clinical practice, my interactions in the Arab-American community, and readings on the subject (Garrod & Kilkenny, 2014). Here is a Somali-American Muslim student at Dartmouth college reflecting on her experience: "What is most frustrating is that while Islam is talked about so often, there is so much ignorance surrounding it. Few people know the difference between the religion, the cultural influences, and the diverse actions of the billion Muslims worldwide. I was turned off by the misinformation in the media, particularly the depiction of Muslims as homogeneous and prone to violence. More people were interested in discussing my faith following the attacks [of 9/11], and even those who were well-intentioned sometimes annoyed me with questions such as, 'What is Muslim food like?'"[9] (Garrod & Kilkenny, 2014, pp. 21–22).

We are constantly bombarded by US "experts" on Islamic and Middle East affairs who do not even speak Arabic. This exemplifies one of Said's premises of orientalism: "abstractions about the Orient … are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities" (Said, 1978, p. 300). Yet no one would be allowed to become a foreign correspondent or a political expert on US affairs if he or she did not speak English, did not read US history, did not learn about US literature, poetry, and the arts, let alone live among Americans of diverse backgrounds to understand their daily life experiences.

Frustrated with her interlocutors' ignorance, which Akhtar (2007) aptly called active "ignoring,"[10] Layal transformed her answer into, "I am not religious." But she realized that her reply might come across as defensive or not enough to satisfy the curiosity of the listener. So she crafted another answer, "My family is Muslim but I am not religious." She still worried she was being defensive. Defensive against whom, I wondered, her American interlocutors or herself? It had struck her when she moved to the United States how her secular friends of Jewish background invariably identified themselves as Jewish. "They don't even wait to be asked. It comes out spontaneously in their conversations. Lisa [one of her secular Jewish friends] didn't even know what Yom Kippur was about. I couldn't believe it. She's so comfortable in her Jewishness." Could she relate to Islam in that way, as a cultural heritage? Should she identify as a "secular Muslim?" The question of Islam tormented her. "What does being Muslim mean to you?" I asked. As we explored this question, the problem became clearer. "When I tell people I'm Muslim, they assume I go to the mosque, I pray, I am reserved around men, and God knows what. There is a whole package that comes with it. But that's not me. When I look into the American Muslim associations, they have similar expectations: that I would want to celebrate Eid and join their religious events. But that's not me." I could hear her voice crack.

What Layal was communicating to me was how invisible she felt in *this* Islam that others had crafted for her. There was something else, however. Her answer betrayed that she too had internalized the Western societal definition of what a Muslim is: a conservatively religious Muslim. And *that* she was not. By internalizing this stereotype, Layal denied her own history of a rich, diverse, Muslim mosaic, in which resided her Muslim friends, who engaged her in vibrant discussions about life and world events; her Muslim father who was "kind hearted" and "witty;" and her pious Muslim mother, her "best feminist role model," who told her "to make the sky your limit."

In her powerful and moving TED talk, the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie spoke about "the danger of the single story." She warned, "show a people as one thing, as only one thing over and over again, and that is what they become" (2009). Muslims might internalize their stereotype against their own interests and against their own historical truths. The poster of the Muslim woman veiled in an US-flag-hijab is one example of such internalization (Helmore, 2017). In addition to this signifier reinforcing the stereotype of Muslim women as veiled women, the story behind the creation of the poster itself is also quite telling. The woman in the poster is Munira Ahmed, a Muslim Bangladeshi-American woman. In real life, Munira is NOT veiled, but she wore the veil for the sole purpose of creating the poster (Helmore, 2017). In other words, Munira had to veil herself to become visible (as a Muslim woman to a US public); and by doing so she herself, a non-veiled Muslim woman, became invisible. One finds numerous examples of this internalized constricted identity. Take this statement by Anniesa Hasibuan, a 30-year-old Indonesian designer of modest fashion collections, who "made history in September during New York Fashion Week with a catwalk show in which every model wore hijabs in ivory, peach and gray silk," receiving a standing ovation (Paton, 2016). Hasibuan believes, "fashion is one of the outlets in which we can … normalize the hijab in America and other parts of the West, so as to break down stereotypes and demystify misconceptions," adding that a hijab is not simply a statement or a symbol, "but *a part of a Muslim woman's identity*, an identity they are asserting more confidently" (Paton, 2016, emphasis added). By making the hijab an integral part of every Muslim woman's identity, Hasibuan inadvertently reasserted that same stereotype she aimed to "break down."

We all fall into the trap of these stereotypes. On the day following Trump's election, a friend in Beirut called me to check in. As I was lamenting how a Trump presidency might unfold, my friend seemed nonchalant, reminding me how this happened all the time in Lebanon, so what's the big deal? I became frustrated with her line of thinking ultimately telling her, "Well, if it's ok there, it's not ok here." Following our conversation, I felt terribly guilty for having bought into this elitist Euro-US-centric expectation that it's fine for despotism and corruption to happen "there" but they should not happen "here."

As I noted earlier, these stereotypes (and their internalizations by Muslims and Arabs) are not recent phenomena but seem to date back to the early Muslim Arab conquests of the seventh century, which provoked negative appraisals of Muslims and Arabs by the conquered communities in the orient, some of which later converted to Islam but continued to hold negative views of Arabs (Itani, 2011, pp. 304–305). When the power dynamic shifted in the early nineteenth century, the dawn of Western colonialism of what is now the Middle East, these stereotypes were used, and perhaps exaggerated, by the colonialists (Itani, 2011, p. 305). Joseph Massad (2007) provides one example of the nineteenth century Arabs' adoption of their contemporary European colonial scholars' views of Arab history: that "Arab cultural production during the Ottoman period [was] 'decadent'" (p. 29). Massad notes that such unquestioned adoption had led Arab scholars to neglect that period of their history. Quoting another scholar, Khaled El Rouayheb, Massad proceeds, "This lack of interest stands in stark contrast to the abundance of extant poetry … What seems to have been lacking so far is not source-material but modern scholarly interest. This lack of interest presumably derives from the apparently still influential assumption that there was not much interesting or original Arabic poetry produced between 1500 and 1800 [the Ottoman period]. From the nineteenth century onwards, historians of Arabic literature have tended to dismiss the period between 1500 and 1800 as one of cultural stagnation or decadence (*inhitat*). However, it is still difficult to see how such an assessment can be justified in the absence of any serious study of the poetic output of the period" (p. 30). Once again, Muslims and Arabs seemed to have internalized their stereotypes against their own interests and against their own historical truths.

7 | A WORD ON "ORIENTAL ISLAMOPHOBIA"

Islamophobia is not exclusively a Western phenomenon. Given the long history of prejudice against Muslims and what we know about the internalization of stereotypes and about victims' "identification with the aggressor," it may not be surprising to know that some Muslims themselves may hold prejudice against the religion and culture of Islam. Also, as I noted earlier, at some time in the twentieth century, secular political movements gathered large followings in many Muslim countries. One possible problem associated with these movements involved holding condescending attitudes towards Islamic religion and local ethnic culture, which were considered "backward" compared to those of what was considered the more developed West. At times, such attitudes brought ironic outcomes. For example, in 1925, Turkey passed the "Hat Law" prohibiting Turkish men from wearing their traditional headwear (turban or fez) because it was deemed not to be "civilized" (Genç, 2013). Men wearing anything except European-style headwear faced imprisonment (Genç, 2013). Turkey had also banned the hijab in 1980, long before European countries did (Smith, 2013). Only within the past six years did the Turkish government lift its ban on wearing the headscarf at universities (in 2011) and state institutions (in 2013).[11] Benslama (2009) described Habib Bourguiba's (former Tunisian secular Muslim-born leader) condescending attitude toward the religion of Islam: "By the early 1960s, the Tunisian Habib Bourguiba had begun the process: he closed the large theological [Islamic] university of Zitouna, nearly three thousand years old … he initiated the revolution in women's rights … the abolition of repudiation and polygamy … introducing the possibility of full adoption [of children, which is prohibited in Islam] … *In the middle of the month of Ramadan, before the television cameras, he drank to the health of his people*" (p. 1, emphasis added). Bourguiba's toasting alcohol to the "health of his people" during Ramadan is akin to a secular Jewish leader eating pork on TV on Saturday while wishing his people a "happy Shabbat."

8 | SHAME AND COLLAPSED IDENTITY

Internalizing a stereotyped identity inevitably leads to shame not only because stereotypes tend to be negative but internalizing them means also that one has to disown aspects of the self that do not fit the stereotype, thus constricting one's identity. "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story … The single story robs people of their dignity"

(Adichie, 2009). Aspects of the self that do not fit the stereotype may feel unrecognized and therefore shameful. Thus, they may get disowned (i.e., dissociated) by the individual. The shame experienced under Islamophobia may, therefore, be the outcome of omission (dismissing and refusing to recognize some aspects of Muslim selves) and commission (the direct humiliating effect of injurious speech, discriminatory acts, and hate crimes against Muslims). Auestad (2015) also observed how shame and guilt were often conflated in prejudice, "in prejudiced accusations towards 'an other' or 'others' [as in 'Muslim men are violent' or 'Muslim women are submissive'], guilt and shame appear to be so closely identified as to be indistinguishable. They can be rendered as claims to the effect that someone's action is expressive of an essence that the person cannot change; thus, it would be appropriate for that other person to feel both guilt and shame" (p. 88). Of course, this is precisely how prejudice is supposed to work, transferring shame (about vulnerability, need, aggression, hate, etc.) from the dominant culture onto a minority and marginalized culture.

As Layal and I explored her conflicts about her cultural identity, her shame about Islam and Arabic culture began to emerge. She recalled memories of shame about being Muslim, dating back to her childhood. "Muslims are backward, uneducated, loud and in your face," she told me. Growing up, she had felt ashamed about introducing her parents to her school friends because her parents were not "sophisticated"; they spoke with a regional accent and her mother wore the hijab. Earlier in her analysis, Layal had reported to me that some of her friends (Muslims and Christians) used to envy her for having parents who allowed her to bring boyfriends to her home and did not pressure her to get married soon after graduating from college. When I pointed out to her what she had previously told me, and that most of her friends were Muslim too, and that some of them seemed more conservative than her family, she was taken aback. It turned out that the friends in whose company Layal had felt ashamed came from well-educated upper-middle-class to upper-class families who could easily afford sending their children to the prestigious private school she had attended. As I listened carefully to Layal's contradictory statements, I wondered whether she was mixing up religion and class. My wondering was also based on my knowledge of the fact that Lebanese Shia Muslims were so socially and economically marginalized at the time of Layal's growing up that the Lebanese Shia sect was referred to as "the class of the deprived." What Layal was feeling ashamed about seemed to be her parents' uneducated working-class background more than their religious beliefs or practices, which seemed quite liberal.

Layal's shame about her Muslim and Arab backgrounds was not only related to class or childhood experiences, however. Layal recalled feeling ashamed and angry when American peers made derogatory comments about her Arabic or Muslim background. At a social gathering in the first week of her arrival in the United States (a few years before 9/11), one man asked her, "Why do Lebanese men beat their wives?" The man was a fellow professor. "These were the first words he said to me when my friend introduced him to me," Layal recalled. "The way he asked the question, so confidently and so boldly, I didn't know what to say. I thought maybe he was right. I just froze. But later I remembered that in my 30 years of living in Lebanon, I knew only two men who used to beat their wives. They were neighbors and would do it when they got drunk. Everyone hated them for it. My mom used to urge one of the women to leave her husband. She left him many times but always came back because he would beg her. I still feel terrible every time I remember that man's [her colleague] question, how I just stood there like a stupid idiot."

Such encounters along with the stereotyped questions about her background and the media portrayals of Muslims and Arabs had driven Layal to gradually cut the cultural tie with Islamic and Arabic cultures. She did not completely sever that tie. As mentioned earlier, she had married a secular American of Arab descent (he did not speak Arabic and was not connected to the Arab American community, however). She continued to listen to Arabic music and cook Lebanese dishes. She loved speaking Arabic in her sessions with me. Layal, however, told me that a few years after she moved to the United States, she made sure to stay away from Arab, particularly Muslim, peers. With the Arab friends she had befriended, she dismissed their lamentations about their experiences with prejudice: her Hijabi friend who complained about how every time she went through airport security she was "randomly" selected for a thorough search, her brown Arab friends who were called "sand niggers," and stories that her friends had told her about being "grilled" at airports or discriminated against at the workplace. Her white skin, light brown curly hair and light brown eyes also made it easier for her to forget about her cultural heritage. She could easily "pass." She denied having experienced any direct acts of prejudice against her.

As we explored all these experiences, a painful memory came to her mind. Layal recounted an incident during her mother's visit to the United States after the birth of Layal's daughter. Layal and her mother had gone shopping at a nearby store and as they got back to their car, they both noticed a long and deep scratch on the driver's side of the car, running from the hood side all the way back to the trunk. Layal thought that perhaps a shopping cart was left sliding by her car, but she realized that the scratch was much higher than the height of the cart, suggesting a deliberate action. Layal's mother immediately wondered whether someone might have scratched the car with a key, on purpose, after seeing her wearing a hijab. Layal didn't think much about her mother's concern at the time, but as she recalled the incident, particularly the sad and worried look on her "strong" mother's face, she started sobbing. It was the pain of these tears that she had wanted to bury by cutting the tie to her Arabic and Islamic cultures.

Layal's shame about her culture confirmed my cultural observations. For decades, Arab citizens have internalized the notion that their lives are not worthy. When the Israeli government launched a massive attack (air raids and ground invasion) on Gaza in January 2009 in response to Hamas' rocket shelling on Israeli towns, the Lebanese journalist and writer, Hussam Itani (2009), noted the international community's perceived equivalence between the shattering of Israelis' windows and "our dead" (p. 23). Windows of Israeli homes were shattered as the result of Hamas shelling. One thousand four hundred and forty Palestinians, more than half of whom were civilians, died as the result of Israeli attacks on Gaza (Congressional Research Service, 2009). Thirteen Israelis, including four civilians, also died during that war (Congressional Research Service, 2009). Itani (2009) added, "before we are held accountable for our mistakes, which we admit are plenty, our people ought to be recognized as people and human beings" (p. 23). Arabs feel unrecognized not only by the international community. They also believe that their leaders and governments do not care one iota about them. Gaddafi called his people "rats." Assad has been working hard on exterminating his "rebellious subjects" with barrel bombs and chemical weapons. When, in February 2011, a group of parents complained about the disappearance of their young sons, aged 10 to 15, in the infamous political Syrian prisons, to Atef Najib, Bashar Al Assad's cousin and head of security in Daraa, Syria, they were told, "Forget about your children. Go have new kids. If you can't, send us your wives and we will get them pregnant for you" (Al Amin, 2017; Mackinnon, 2016). How can any human being not hang his or her head in shame in the face of all this humiliation and cruelty? It is, therefore, not surprising that in public and intellectual discourses one encounters self-denigrating self-appraisals of the Arab (and Muslim) self. A known slogan in Lebanon is "Al Arab Jarab," which translates into "Arabs are filthy." Another popular Arabic saying describes Arabs as worthless as a pair of shoes: "If Arabs were beaten up with a shoe, the shoe would shout 'why am I being beaten-up?'"[12]

9 | COLLAPSED IDENTITY THROUGH SHAME-INDUCED SPLITTING, PROJECTION, AND IDEALIZATION

In her attempt to avoid the painful shame, Layal chose to cut her cultural tie, severing the self from its Islamic and Arabic cultural context, thus constricting her own identity. On the opposite end, the shame-stricken individual might claim what he or she had felt ashamed about and idealize it: a Muslim might grow more rigidly religious (fundamentalist) or nationalist. This process might entail immersing oneself in Islam (in this case, Islam is often conceived of as frozen in space and time of a "glorious Islamic past") while excluding "Western elements" of one's identity (especially for immigrants or their descendants); getting involved with fundamentalist political parties; or joining a paramilitary or a terrorist group (e.g., DAESH or Al Qaeda). Islamic fundamentalism, like any fundamentalism, thus, exists on a spectrum, from non-violent fundamentalist religiosity to militarism.

In his paper on the impact of "growing up under everyday Islamophobia," Fakhry Davids (2009) discussed his psychoanalytic consultation with Ahmed, a UK-born young man of Pakistani immigrant parents (p. 181). Growing up in the UK, Ahmed had experienced "the awful racist taunts and the ongoing prejudice" at his working class school (p. 183). His parents, focused on getting him a good education, dismissed his complaints of being bullied at school.[13] During adolescence, Ahmed became "distressed" during the Bosnian war by "the fact that the international community by failing to intervene to prevent the Bosnian genocide, appeared deaf[14] to the plight of the Muslim" (p. 183). Later, the war in Chechnya erupted, "once again filling television screens with footage of cruel brutality towards European Muslims. Again, the world seemed powerless or unwilling to act, but he drew comfort from reports that foreigners – 'Arabs' – were fighting alongside Chechen forces. Perhaps they too felt the way he did, and it was then that the idea of going to Afghanistan to train militarily took hold … However, whilst he anticipated a military machine in which he would be trained in the use of firearms to fight the Russian army in Chechnya, it turned out that they were being trained in bomb-making. It did not take long for him to realize that a campaign of terror against Western targets, in which innocent civilians would inevitably be caught up, was the goal. These were the very scenes in Chechnya that had so appalled him." Disillusioned, Ahmed left the training camps and returned to Britain to teach at the local mosque. "[D]riven to the verge of a breakdown by a fear that he would be arrested and handed over to the Americans,"[15] Ahmed decided to consult with Davids for treatment of terror and anxiety (p. 182).

Although Davids did not specifically mention shame as one of the key affects in his patient's experience with everyday Islamophobia and in his decision to join military training, it was implicit in his conceptualization of Ahmed's "denigrated Muslim self." Referencing Fanon's concept of the "dual self" of black individuals under colonialism, Davids posited that under the racism of Islamophobia, a similar split might occur in British youths of Pakistani descent,[16] who develop a "dual self" consisting of an idealized "white English one" and a denigrated "Muslim Pakistani one" (p. 187). This splitting might allow some youths, like Ahmed, to "explicitly [take] on a particular, magnified version of their unconsciously denigrated Muslim identities … [while projecting] aspects of the self associated with being Western into the Westerner/unbeliever, allowing the process of engagement between the two [now split aspects of his identity] to begin … [F]ollowing Fanon, I am suggesting that the violent hatred characterizing the relationship in the mind between Muslim (e.g., Chechen) and non-Muslim (e.g., Russian) can be accounted for by the violence against the Muslim self attending the process by which the white/Western identification was inscribed in the mind (Davids 1996). This is the inevitable psychic consequence of growing up as a member of a disadvantaged, disempowered group" (pp. 187–188).

This splitting between a now denigrated West and an idealized Islam is well illustrated in the following statement by Davids (2009), informed by Ed Husain's (2007) book *The Islamist*: "[D]emocracy is [seen as] an evil invention of the West, intended to subjugate and enslave, whereas in the golden age of Islam – when Europe was in the Dark Ages – things were altogether better. All [Muslims] must therefore unite and work for the messianic coming of the *khaleefah* – the undisputed leader of the faithful – who will govern justly and in the benign way that characterized the Prophet's rule in Medina. How? By opposing the system of the unbelieving West at every opportunity, arguing for the superiority of Islam, and enlisting the masses. This is seen as superior to the empty ritual prayers of ordinary Muslims" (p. 186).

In my view, following Davids (2009), fundamentalism, through the mechanism outlined above, might serve as a step (or a phase) toward further integration of different aspects of the self in that it entails reclaiming a denigrated and shamed aspect of one's identity, albeit in an idealized form, provided that this idealized reclamation is not an end in itself and that it does not end up in violence. Davids (2009) provided further illustration of such integration in his account of another British born Pakistani young man (Ed Husain)[17] who had followed the path of Islamic fundamentalism (without military training) but ended up repudiating fundamentalism, which, according to Davids, seemed to have "facilitated [his] journey towards a more integrated identity" (p. 189).

10 | COLLAPSED IDENTITY THROUGH COMMUNITY SOCIAL DEFENSES

So far, I have discussed the ways in which Muslim individuals face Islamophobia focusing primarily on their intrapsychic dynamics. I will turn now to discussing some of the social responses of Muslim communities to Islamophobia. In the face of shame, a Muslim individual might seek refuge in the solidarity of a group (not necessarily fundamentalist in orientation) that represents his or her cultural heritage. While this strategy is useful in validating one's cultural identity and in feeling connected and supported, it risks silencing one's own agency when the group favors solidarity at the expense of diversity, dissent, and criticism of one's community. This dynamic may forestall the individual's creative use of culture. Kalin (2011) writes: “Confronted with guilt by association and communal stigmatization, even the most conscientious and analytical members of the Muslim community take refuge in the kind of group solidarity that makes self-criticism look like a self-defeating strategy” (p. 17).

This dynamic does not apply only to Muslim communities in the West but also to any community experiencing threat, causing that community to squash difference and present itself as one front. Facing prejudice, a community might respond by defining itself primarily in opposition to its stereotype. The community presents itself in terms of what it is not (e.g., not terrorist, not violent, not backward), thus, ironically, making the stereotype its point of reference, albeit through denial (McGinty, 2012, p. 2967). By silencing difference to secure unity and by making stereotypes a point of reference, Muslim communities might end up inadvertently reinforcing the same stereotypes (of monolithic Muslims) they strive to fight. One also encounters this identity-through-stereotype-negation in Muslim individuals as well, who define themselves in reference to stereotypes. Here is how an American-Iranian dentist, Shawn Sadri, described himself after he was asked to leave an airplane after making a comment about Trump's deportation of Mexicans: “I was born a Muslim but *I'm not religious*, nor are my parents. *We drink*! We are very Americanized and happy to be here” (Bever, 2017, emphasis added).

In its fight for equality with the dominant culture, a community threatened by prejudice might deny not only the differences among its members but also the differences between the community and the dominant culture. McGinty (2012) analyzed Public Relations material and online representations from major Muslim organizations in the United States as well as seminars[18] given by public figures from these organizations (e.g., Islamic Society of North America and Muslim Public Affairs Council). She observed how these organizations and their representatives created a counternarrative to Islamophobia, which involved the construction of a “‘mainstream American Muslim’ identity” (p. 2958) no different from that of non-Muslim Americans, highlighting commonalities between them while ignoring differences. Here is a sample of the Muslim leaders' statements that McGinty (2012) reported:

> DR. LOUAY SAFI FROM THE ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF MILWAUKEE: “I think the best way to counter that [Islamophobia] is to assert ourselves as a people of faith, as a community that really follows the tradition of Abraham. A tradition that is very much alive and kicking in this country … it is to be people of charity, of compassion, of justice, of fairness, and of respect for humanity … There is no friction or dissonance between being Muslim and American. *Our values reflect one another; they don't challenge one another.*” (pp. 2965–2966, emphasis added)
> SALAM AL–MARAYATI: “*Islamic values and Americans values are really one and the same*.” (p. 2966, emphasis added)

To say that two cultures, even two Western cultures, are “one and the same” is simply untrue. In fact, within America itself there are many conflicting sets of values. This denial of difference is related to a commonly held confusion between equality and sameness: in order to feel equal to the other, I have to become the other. This confusion presents itself in multiple areas where bias and prejudice prevail such as gender and race, (for men and women to be equal in their rights as citizens, some feel the need to prove that there are no differences between men and women). Equality, however, does not mean, and should not entail, absence of difference.

This tendency to deny difference from the dominant culture is heightened for immigrant communities when host cultures require immigrants to shed their cultural origins and become “like us” as “proof” of loyalty and assimilation. Kalin (2011) writes, “another false assumption is often presented: The assumption that because different minority groups have distinct religious, ethnic, and cultural traditions, their central value system is largely incompatible with that of their host societies” (p. 7). The challenge, according to Kalin, is to preserve cultural specificity while agreeing on a “set of universal normative principles [e.g., justice and equality]” (p. 7). As exemplified in Glenn Beck's interview with Keith Ellison, who was asked to “prove” he was not working with “our enemies,” the loyalty of the Muslim citizen in the West is often suspect. “Taken together, [these attitudes and expectations] underline the fact that today's

Muslim must not expect to be seen as 'one of us'. Instead, he/she is constantly under suspicion; and to be suspected is to be swiftly punished, the matter of guilt or innocence an academic afterthought" (Davids, 2009, pp. 177–178). This suspicion obliges an orientation in the Muslim citizen toward "proving" that he or she shares the "core values of the host country," reinforcing a defensive attitude toward identity, which risks disavowing self attributes that are not part of those "core values." It is worth noting, however, that non-Muslim citizens of Western countries are themselves very divided on these same core values (for example, in the United States, it is not uncommon for Americans to disagree on the separation of state and church, the study of evolution in schools, gay rights and abortion rights, etc.). This paradox exacerbates Muslims' feeling of being specifically targeted and shamed.

The minority group's orientation toward obliteration of difference, in response to the threat of prejudice and the demands for assimilation, erodes the boundary between the self and "others," creating a sense of alienation, "insecurity and homelessness" (Kalin, 2011, p. 12), as aspects of the self that feel different need to be disowned. The "others" I am referring to here are both the others inside the minority group and those outside, in the dominant culture. Several of my immigrant patients, Muslims and non-Muslims, have described heightened feelings of alienation following some social gatherings with their ex-compatriots. In our explorations of their feelings of estrangement, some patients explained that if they were to meet these ex-compatriots back home they would not find much common ground with them. Once again, a collapse can occur in the identity formation such that the ability to play with differences is lost (i.e., differences between one's self and others within the ethnic minority and between one's self and others in the dominant culture).

This collapse does not impact only the Muslim individual but also Muslim communities in their ability to continually review and update their theology, cultural history, civil laws, and so forth, as informed by an up-to-date body of knowledge and contemporary lifestyles of Muslim constituents. It is worth noting that many Muslim scholars, leaders, and communities have already, and for a long time, been debating these issues. My point here is to emphasize that such debates may deepen and expand when Muslim communities recognize and face their social defenses against prejudiced "others." On this issue, Abu Zaid (Abu Zaid & Nelson, 2004) wrote, "sometimes I feel like a fireman putting out fires here and there as I address and try to write about the political trajectory that both Western and Middle Eastern policy takes. It's a different kind of work than what I had been doing with the Qur'an [applying hermeneutics to the study of the Qur'an]. *Putting out fires is not the same thing as creating knowledge*" (p. 192, emphasis added).

11 | ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FACING SHAME

How might Muslim individuals and communities maintain a realistic sense of who they are amidst all that shame? Perhaps one ought to start with owning or claiming one's shame. By owning the shame, I do not mean that Muslims are essentially shameful or that they should have felt shame to begin with. Owning one's shame means to face it; to recognize it (e.g., I feel ashamed); and to understand its origins (e.g., internalizing colonialist stereotypes, feeling soul-crushed by oppressive regimes) and the defenses built against it. Facing shame also means to challenge it by appreciating the diversity and historicity of Muslim narratives. McGinty (2012) writes, "problematic to the ongoing debate on Muslims and Islam and the representation of Islam in the United States, as elsewhere in 'the West', is the absence of narratives generated by Muslims themselves" (p. 2957). What McGinty (2012) meant by narratives involved "the concrete but messy complexities of personal lives and experiences of Muslim Americans [or any Muslim, I would add]," moving away from "binaries and reduced social categories ('Muslim', 'Arab', 'American') and the powerful public meanings attached to these" (p. 2967). Finally, facing shame also means addressing societal ailments that have triggered shame through, for example, social activism against prejudice and human rights' abuses.[19] In Fakhry Davids' presentation of his patient Ahmed, he emphasized an important historical fact in Ahmed's story: his parents, focused on his education, dismissed his complaints of being bullied at school. This story also suggests the possibility of intergenerational transmission of shame. For example, one wonders about Ahmed's parents' own unprocessed shame about their Pakistani "denigrated" selves, making it impossible for them to identify it in their children, let alone help them with it. Had Ahmed's parents been able to validate his experience of shame by comforting him, naming the shame, and challenging it both with him and with his school, one wonders about a potentially different outcome.

Shame may feel too painful and toxic to bear; individuals may take dangerous measures to avoid it at all expense, as shown in the cases of Layal (her severance of the Muslim/Arabic cultural tie) and Ahmed (his idealization of his Muslim self). These protective, defensive, strategies may also involve outsourcing the shame, by projecting it onto others. One example of such projection (of shame) is observed in the way Arabs may treat their migrant domestic workers, some of whom are Muslims, who typically come from Africa, South and Southeast Asia. Arabic and international media reports and activists have documented the Arabs' racist treatment of their migrant workers, who are often emotionally, and sometimes physically and sexually, abused (Begum, 2017). Of course, this is not to say that there aren't many Arab families who respect the dignity of their migrant domestic workers and treat them well.

This transfer of shame may also be observed in the way different Muslim communities have dealt with the Western claims that Muslims are “backward” and “dangerous.” Non-Arab Muslim Asians may blame Arabs for the current state of affairs of Muslim cultures. Arabs tend to blame Iran. The Levantine Arabs may blame the Gulf States and the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia. The Arab Gulf States blame Iran. One may also notice this dynamic in some secular Iranians who emphasize their Zoroastrian origins, bypassing the shameful Islam, or in some Lebanese seculars and Christians who prefer to emphasize the Phoenician, rather than Arabic, roots of Lebanese culture. Muslims may also project the shame back to what they perceive as its Western colonialist origins by shaming and rejecting *all* Western values as “decadent” or “imperialist.”

Finally, unprocessed shame may drive one to the abyss of violence, hopelessness, and despair. Of Arab hopelessness and despair, the late Syrian poet, Muhammad Al-Maghoot, once said, “Don't fall into hope. Don't lie to yourself. There is nothing to be hopeful about as long as the options presented to us are known: either the man with the star (lieutenant/military) or the man with the beard (terrorist) and each feeds onto the other. The former steals your dignity and perhaps your fingernails and teeth. And the latter steals your basic rights and turns you into a lump of darkness”[20] (Charbel, 2012, translation from Arabic is mine).

12 | SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have discussed how Islamophobia might contribute to the collapse of individual and collective Muslim identities and how this collapse might be mediated by shame. By creating and propagating stereotypes, Islamophobia robs Muslims of the richness and historicity of their racial, ethnic, and religious narratives. Internalization of these stereotypes, direct experience with injurious speech (e.g., taunting, bullying), discriminatory acts, or other hostile actions may lead to shame and foreclosure of some cultural aspects of Muslim identities. Driven by shame, some Muslims may cut the tie to their culture, constricting their cultural identity. Other Muslims may deal with their shame by idealizing their Islamic religion or culture, which become frozen in space and time, as in fundamentalism, again constricting their Muslim identity. In my paper, I also discussed the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim communities and the social defenses it induces (e.g., squashing dissent, denying difference with dominant culture), leading to a constricted collective identity. I proposed that facing the Islamophobia-induced shame is important in order for Muslim individuals to explore and play with the diverse iterations of their identities. Facing shame also allows Muslim communities to seriously and non-defensively explore questions related to their theology, culture, and other issues relevant to their communities. Such critical self-examinations are important in all cultures.

One final note: by highlighting Muslims' need to face the Islamophobia-induced-shame, I do not mean to discount the urgent need for the dominant cultures to own their responsibility in this process. For example, these cultures need to understand what function Islamophobia may serve for them. Knowing that prejudice, any prejudice, involves disavowing unacceptable aspects of one's identity (individual and collective) and projecting those aspects onto “others,” we ought to ask, what unacceptable attributes are being dumped onto the Muslim “others” and why? Ironically, the dominant culture's disavowal of these unacceptable attributes may contribute to the collapse of its own identity formation. Ascribing societal ailments to the foreign "others" "is one of the hypocritical lies that save us from the clear sight of ourselves," Lincoln Steffens wrote in 1904! (p. 3). From this perspective, combatting Islamophobia serves a beneficial purpose for both the dominant and oppressed cultures. "When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise" (Adichie, 2009).

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ENDNOTES

[1] My conceptualization of identity follows that of psychoanalysts and philosophers who view identity as relational or intersubjective: it always involves others. In their interesting review of "the origins of the analytic field metaphor," Civitarese and Ferro (2013) discussed the historical origins of the concept of intersubjective identity, dating it back to Klein, Merleau-Ponty, Winnicott, Bion, and to contemporary psychoanalytic field theorists, particularly Ogden. "Like Klein, Merleau-Ponty considered that identity can be thought of only in terms of difference, of the intersection between the subject's body and the world of things and other people … Hence Merleau-Ponty's assertion: 'I am a field, an experience' (1945, p. 473) – that is, *a system of relationships*" (Civitarese & Ferro, 2013, pp. 191–192).

[2] This journal issue followed the infamous sexual abuse incidents during the 2016 New Year celebrations in Germany perpetrated by immigrants of North African descent. My point here is not to discount the responsibility of these immigrants but to challenge the generalization that was made at the time: that all Muslim refugees and all Muslims are potential sexual predators (particularly against Western women), as this journal seemed to indicate.

[3] During the Muslim holiday of Eid al Adha, Muslims commemorate Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son on God's command. During this holiday, Muslims who can afford it slaughter an animal, typically a sheep, and share the meat with the poor.

[4] In this paper, I use the term DAESH instead of ISIS because it is the original Arabic acronym for the "Islamic State." DAESH may also be perceived as a twist on the Arabic word "DAESS," which means a man stepping on, or trampling, something or somebody, a more appropriate representation of the group's extreme acts of terror. ISIS is the name of the famous Egyptian Goddess. I find it unacceptable to spoil her name.

[5] Women who wear the headscarf or hijab.

[6] Sutton (2013) similarly observed: "Yet not once does the scholar [Kristeva] engage with a single Muslim text, commentary, scholar, or theologian; her process of psychoanalysis apparently does not require such resources, though it does invoke the likes of Kant, Dante, Nietzsche, and Aristotle, as though the author were checking names off a 'Great Western Books' syllabus" (p. 7).

[7] The timing of this tidal change varied among countries: It started in the 1970s in countries with majority Sunni Islam (impacted by Saudi funding of religious schools and by Western and Middle Eastern governments' promoting Islamic discourses in order to gain power) while it took effect in the 1980s and later among Shia Muslims, following the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979.

[8] In Lebanon, it is considered rude to ask directly a new acquaintance about his or her religious beliefs. Religious affiliation, however, is often deduced from knowing the individual's name, hometown, residence, etc.

[9] Of course, there is no such thing as "Muslim food" just like there is no such thing as "Christian food." Geography and culture are being confused with religious practices.

[10] "Lack of knowledge often plays a lesser role [in prejudice] than the active jettisoning of available information that does not support one's emotionally needed convictions and plans. It is more often a matter of ignoring than of ignorance" (Akhtar, 2007, p. 9).

[11] Unfortunately, this change occurred amid a regime transition to totalitarianism.

[12] The original quotation in Arabic is attributed to the Syrian poet, Nizar Qabbani. "Shaabon iza douriba al-hizaou bi ra'ssihi saha al hizaou biayi zanbin oudrabou." The translation is mine.

[13] "[E]ducation was so highly prized that just about any complaint about school frustrated and annoyed [the] parents and thus [the children's complaints about the racist bullying at school] fell on deaf ears" (p. 183).

[14] It is worth noting here the parallel between the "deafness" Ahmed experienced in his parents and in the international community.

[15] Davids believed that these events had occurred in the context of G. W. Bush's "war on terror," with a "real risk of him [Ahmed] being arrested, extradited and quite possibly ending up at Guantanamo Bay" because of his military training (p. 183).

[16] Davids emphasized that this dynamic might also apply to any member of "a minority out-group subjected to the forces of everyday racism" (p. 187).

[17] Davids based his formulation on his reading of Ed Husain's (2007) book *The Islamist*.

[18] These seminars were held in 2007–2008 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as part of a university-community collaboration project, "Combatting Islamophobia by empowering women."

[19] This is to underscore the importance of political and economic interventions.

[20] The Syrian regime is notorious for torturing its political dissidents. One of its infamous torture techniques involves fingernail and tooth extractions. The Syrian rebellion, which later devolved into civil war, was sparked by the Assad Regime's imprisonment of a group of teenage boys from Daraa in 2011 and torturing them by extracting their fingernails, simply because they wrote on their school walls "your turn has come Dr. [Bashar Al Assad]." These are the same boys referred to previously in this paper.

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