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Judging by Appearances: Perceived Discrimination among South Asian Muslim Women in the US and the UAE

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Abstract

The current study addresses perceived discrimination among South Asian Muslim women living in the United States (US) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). US participants reported greater perceptions of discrimination than UAE participants. In both countries, perceived discrimination mainly took the form of subtle nuances rather than direct harassment. Although participants reported the greatest intensity of perceived discrimination at work, hijabis (women who wear the Islamic headscarf) felt this more than non-hijabis. Conversely, non-hijabis felt greater intensity of discrimination in social spaces within Muslim contexts than hijabis. Despite feeling most comfortable socializing with either Muslims or South Asians, participants felt that, aside from strangers, their greatest sources of perceived discrimination also came from within their religious or cultural groups. Discussion of perceived discrimination touches upon the social aspects of being a South Asian Muslim in a Western secular context and a globalized Islamic one.

Key Words: Perceived Discrimination, Muslim Women, Hijab, Islamic Headscarf

Introduction

Discrimination occurs when members of a socially defined group are treated differently or excluded from activities because of their group membership. Allport (1954) described a range of discriminatory practices, from antilocution, avoidance, and rejection to physical harassment and even genocide. Discrimination may be intentional or unintentional, personal or institutional; however, the perception of discrimination varies depending on the observer. Individuals who are a part of stigmatized group may utilize strategies, such as anticipating and preparing for discrimination, to lessen the sting of social disadvantage (Major, Keiser, O'Brian and McCoy, 2007).

Within the South Asian and Muslim communities in the United States, reports of discrimination increased as a result of 9/11. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) received almost 500 complaints of religious discrimination from September 11, 2001 to May 7, 2002, many of which were related to the Islamic headscarf (Moore, 2007). Over 700 incidents of violence occurred against Arabs or Muslims or those perceived to be Arab or Muslim in the first nine weeks following 9/11. Between September 11, 2001 and October 11, 2002, over 80 Muslims or Arab Americans were illegally removed from airplanes (Ibish, 2003 as cited in Awad, 2010). Additionally, a 2003 survey evaluating anti-Arab, anti-Muslim and anti-South Asian sentiment conducted by the New York City Commission on Human Rights found

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that 69 percent of respondents reported incidents of perceived discrimination, including workplace discrimination, ethnic and religious insults, and physical harassment. Survey respondents were 47% Arab, 39% South Asian, and 81% Muslim. Complaints of religious discrimination are often centered on the use of Islamic attire (or ethnic attire that is presumed to be Islamic) in Western public spaces where public and private identities become key players in the debate between secularism and religious practice (Gole, 2003; Ruby, 2006; Droogsma, 2007). According to a recent study (Al Atom, 2014), Islamophobic attitudes in Western countries are actually on the rise, and the most common reason for inciting these attitudes is centered on factors such as Islamic dress that visually distinguishes Muslims from non-Muslims.

The current study explores the perceptions of discrimination among South Asian Muslim women in the United States (US) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with an emphasis on the influence of hijab (the Islamic headscarf) on perceived discrimination. Globalization is encouraging a more holistic and differentiated view of social and psychological constructs (Pasha-Zaidi & Lutz, 2012) such as perceived discrimination. From an international psychology perspective, individuals representing culturally similar backgrounds living in mainstream contexts that do not necessarily reflect those cultural elements can provide a unique voice on the applicability and transferability of many Western paradigms that continue to permeate psychological research. The current study, therefore, sought to identify some of the areas where South Asian Muslim women may perceive discrimination.

As hijab was the central aspect of the study, the US and the UAE were chosen as mainstream contexts due to their positioning as Muslim minority and Muslim majority states. Although aspects related to the practice of hijab, such as modest conduct and respectful interaction between males and females is obligatory for both Muslim men and Muslim women, the onus for maintaining these norms is generally placed on the shoulders of Muslim women. The wearing of the headscarf is encouraged within the Muslim community not only as a reminder to limit interaction between the sexes in the public sphere, but as a religious obligation, a cultural representation to differentiate Muslim values from Western ones, and often as a political symbol to defy Western imperialistic notions of the ideal woman (Ruby, 2006; Read & Bartowski, 2000). As the wearing of hijab opens up social networks for Muslim women who abide by the practice (Read and Bartowski, 2000) it is important to ascertain how the headscarf influences social interactions among women within Muslim communities and in larger cultural contexts. Thus, the current study asked participants to discuss the sources of their perceived discrimination as well as the frequency and intensity of that discrimination.

As subtle and overt forms of discrimination continue to plague stigmatized groups and individuals in different parts of the world, perceived discrimination is an important subject to explore. The impact of perceived discrimination on both mental and physical health has been widely studied. In a meta-analysis of 134 studies, Pascoe and Richman (2009) found that perceived discrimination has a negative impact on healthy behaviors and results in increased stress responses, leading to a variety of illnesses, including depression, obesity, and heart disease. In a study of Asian immigrants in Canada, Noh, Kaspar, and Wickrama (2007) noted that both overt and subtle discrimination have a negative effect on mental health. The experience of depressive symptoms through subtle discrimination was facilitated by feelings of shame, powerlessness, exclusion and humiliation. Overt discrimination, on the other hand, had little impact on depressive symptoms, although blatant forms of discrimination did result in reduced positive affect.

In discussing perceived discrimination, it is important to differentiate between perceived discrimination against oneself personally and perceived discrimination against one's group. Perceived discrimination against one's group is more salient than perceived discrimination against oneself (Moghaddam, Stalkin and Hutcheson, 1997, as cited in Andre, Dronkers, and Fleishmann, 2010; Postmes, Branscombe, Spears, and Young, 1999). In other words, members of groups report greater discrimination against their group than against themselves individually. Even in cases where individuals do not perceive personal discrimination, they may still agree that their ethnic group is discriminated against (Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, and Lalonde, 1990). Thus for the purposes of this study, perceived in-group discrimination rather than personal discrimination was addressed.

The goals of the present study were (a) to identify some of the demographic and attitudinal factors associated with being a South Asian Muslim woman in the US and the UAE; (b) to ascertain the perceptions of discrimination among South Asian Muslim women who wear hijab in public spaces (hijabis) and those who do not (non-hijabis) in these distinct cultural contexts; and (c) to explore the frequency, source, and intensity of that perceived discrimination.

Hijab, Identity, and Perceived Discrimination

As a marker of Islam, the hijab has provided an arena for debate about women's rights and the appropriateness of religious symbols in public spaces. Bans on the wearing of the hijab in many European countries have made international headlines, exacerbating the division between those that are pro-hijab and those that are anti-hijab (Ajrouch, 2007). There is no argument among Muslim women that the headscarf is a necessary component of Islamic prayer; however, the incorporation of the hijab in public life continues to be an area of contention. Both hijabis and non-hijabis report that modesty in dress is an essential aspect of Muslim practice (Siraj, 2011). However, for women who observe the hijab, even the way that the headscarf is worn and how much hair is exposed can create discord among Muslims (Cooper, 2013; Moors, 2013).

Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) has been utilized to study the effect of intergroup and intragroup processes on the development of a personal identity. According to SCT, personal identity is formed by in-group comparisons, whereas social identity is formed in comparison to a salient out-group (Hogg and Turner, 1987). A study by Verkuyten and De Wolf (2002), for example, found that Chinese participants in the Netherlands described themselves differently depending on their group comparison. They were less in favor of ethnic cultural maintenance in the intragroup condition than in the intergroup condition, but showed greater in-group favoritism in the intergroup condition than in the intragroup condition. It is possible therefore that Muslim women may perceive discrimination differently when comparing themselves to one of their in-groups (either ethnic or religious), rather than to a salient out-group. In other words, when using one of their in-groups as the point of comparison, they may be more likely to perceive discrimination due to factors such as personal hijab status, social class, or education level, but when using a salient out-group as their point of contact, they may be more likely to maintain a greater level of in-group cohesion.

The hijab is one form of differentiation between women within the Muslim community. As it is meant to be worn in front of men who are not part of the immediate family or close relatives (non-mahram), it plays a significant role as a social performance—a social construct

that is utilized continuously in front of a set of observers and which bears some influence on those observers (Goffman, 1959 as cited in Gurbuz & Gurbuz, 2006). As such, it not only aids in the construction of a personal identity, but reinforces the collective identities of those who choose to wear it. "If the social attitude toward them is negative because of the collective group they allegedly represent, this stigma forces the adopters to explain to others their views of the headscarf…In each case, since they struggle with the situation they encounter; their collective stigmatized identity becomes more solid…On the other hand, if the social attitude is…positive toward them, they feel that they get this positive feedback because of their collective identity. Therefore, the social expectations from Muslim fellows make them to imagine that they are representing Islam. This predisposition reinforces their collective identity as well" (Gurbuz & Gurbuz, 2006, 17). Thus, by making their religious identity visible in the public sphere, Muslim women may be expressing their allegiance to a variety of groups, including religious, cultural, and feminine (Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Zevallos, 2007). When they receive support from within those communities for the social performance, this reinforces their collective identities as well as their decision to continue the performance.

Much of the literature on perceived discrimination is focused on the experiences of ethnic or religious minorities in Western mainstream contexts (Andre, Dronkers, and Fleishmann, 2010; Bruß, 2008; Skrobanek, 2009; Kaduvettoor, 2009; Awad, 2010). Less is known, however, about perceived discrimination in non-Western contexts. Additionally, although research has addressed the effects of perceived discrimination on the development of a cohesive group identity among stigmatized groups in relation to a majority group, less emphasis has been placed on exploring ethnic and religious discrimination within stigmatized groups. In order to address these gaps in the literature, the present study sought to explore the perceptions of Muslim women in the United States (US) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In order to limit the variability in the data due to ethnic composition, Muslim women from a South Asian background were the focal point of interest.

Mainstream Cultural Contexts

In order to investigate the influence of hijab on South Asian Muslim women's perceptions of discrimination, it is important to have some general knowledge of South Asian identity development in the two national contexts under consideration. As South Asian Muslims have achieved residency in both the US and the UAE through migratory circumstances (either their own or those of their families), they may be forced to contend with possible discrimination as a result of either religion or ethnicity or both. Although politically and geographically quite different, the US and the UAE share some interesting nuances in terms of their role as receiving nations for South Asian migration. The next two sections provide a brief overview of South Asian migration and identity development in the US and the UAE.

South Asians in the US

As a democratic nation-state, the US is a country that allows immigrants to gain citizenship and participate in civic duties. Old adages like "the melting pot" were once used to describe the US as a society that encouraged individuals to assimilate into the mainstream culture. However, this notion of cultural assimilation has more recently been replaced by the "salad bowl" philosophy which promotes multiculturalism rather than a homogenous national

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identity as the norm in US society (Thompson, 2002; Ali, 2008). The concept of a cultural democracy argues that groups in a democratic society have a right to maintain aspects of their community cultures and languages as long as they do not conflict with the democratic ideals of the nation (Banks, 2008). Metaphors, such as the "salad bowl", emphasize the integration of different cultures to create a national identity that is greater than the sum of its parts, with each group contributing to the diversity of the society (Chung & Miller, 2011).

Within American society, South Asian immigrants are often stereotyped as a "model minority" that is successful both in terms of affluence and social morality (Das and Kemp, 1997). However, the perception of belonging to a "model minority" in the US can downplay the existence of racial discrimination against such minority groups, thereby undermining efforts to debate and combat institutional racism (Kaduvettoor, 2009). It also devalues the experiences of South Asians who do not fit into the "model minority" mold.

As identity development for cultural minorities in the US is a highly complex and continually evolving process, it is important to note the influence of transnationalism on South Asian construction of identity and citizenship. The US is a traditional settler society where cultural diversity is considered, in part, a defining characteristic of the nation (Verkuyten, 2007). However, despite such ideological notions of integration and multiculturalism, research suggests that South Asian immigrant youth in the US may view citizenship and national identity as separate constructs. Maira's (2004) study of working class South Asians, for example, found that South Asian youth valued their US citizenship for the opportunities it afforded them, but defined their national identity as Pakistani, Indian, or Bangladeshi. Due to their limited resources and ability to access American public culture, their connection and understanding of their home culture was often based on transnational popular culture as portrayed through Bollywood or Indian cinema. However, the lure of Bollywood for South Asians is not limited to those who cannot afford to participate in American public culture. In fact, Bollywood appears to have a significant effect on maintaining an Indian identity among second generation immigrants, bridging the gap between American culture and the diaspora (Tirumala, 2009).

In response to the perceived threat of acculturation and loss of cultural identity, South Asian families in the US may adopt more rigid cultural boundaries (Almeida, 2005). Even second generation South Asians who attribute a large portion of their cultural competence to the consumption of popular culture are often dismayed by the increasing Westernization of Bollywood movies, preferring films that depict family togetherness and Indian traditions (Tirumala, 2009). Ali's study (2008) of middle class South Asian Muslims in New York notes the different patterns of acculturation that South Asian Muslims undergo in an American context. He identifies three types of individuals: acculturationists (those who value relationships with "American" peers who are not of South Asian or Muslim origin over their own cultural and religious groups), partial acculturationists (those who adopt many mainstream American behaviors, but also retain some aspects of their home culture and religion), and de-acculturationists (those partial acculturationists who actively distance themselves from mainstream American norms they deem to be contrary to Islam). These categories are not static, but evolve over time and are highly dependent on the peer group that individuals choose.

Interestingly, this last category seems to be on the rise among South Asian Muslims in the US, and one marker of this trend is the increasing adoption of visible symbols such as the hijab (Ali, 2008). Regional and religious organizations have developed across the US to build social capital and provide spaces for social bonding and cultural maintenance. Often, these

organizations emerge as the voice of the community and individuals who participate, especially men, gain power and prestige within the community. Whether these organizations function as a medium of self-segregation or as a vehicle for integration depends on the constituents, but a main goal is the preservation and passing down of cultural heritage (Brettell, 2005).

South Asians in the UAE

As a federal monarchy, the political context of the UAE is quite different from that of the US. The UAE consists of seven emirates with political power held in large part by the ruling families in each emirate (Aartun, 2002). As expatriate workers, South Asians usually cannot gain citizenship in the UAE, regardless of the amount of time they spend in the country. Furthermore, children of South Asians that are born in the UAE and other GCC countries retain the citizenship of their expatriate parents and thus cannot gain the privileges of citizenship (Ali, 2011). Thus, like their US counterparts, South Asians in the UAE fall into a transnational context wherein they may identify with a home country that is different from the one in which they reside. However, because there is no path to citizenship in their country of residence and their stay in the UAE is directly linked to their visa and sponsorship status (Weber, 2010), they may have an even greater sense of identification with their home culture due to the impermanent nature of their residence (Mohammad & Sidaway, 2012).

Although South Asians may be found in lower, middle, and upper class societies in the UAE, the lower classes (e.g., maids, service workers, laborers) have begun to receive more attention from international organizations and media outlets due to the increasing awareness of human rights injustices toward lower class migrant workers (Migrant Forum in Asia, 2004; Esim and Smith, 2004; Shaoul, 2007). Middle class South Asians, on the other hand, are generally insulated from the more blatant forms of human exploitation and have enough disposable income to be able to participate in the rampant consumerism which is characteristic of the UAE lifestyle, particularly in cities like Dubai and Abu Dhabi (Vora, 2008). The lure of "the good life" coupled with the very real possibility of deportation and visa cancellation encourages expatriates, including middle class South Asians, to create a closed system that is defined by race and social class (Vora, 2008; Ali, 2011; Kathiravelu, 2012). As a result, middle class South Asians in the UAE form a relatively invisible cohort in terms of extant literature on the diaspora (Vora, 2008).

Whereas South Asian immigrants in the US are often considered a "model minority", stereotypes of South Asians in the UAE often reflect the racial hierarchies that have developed as a result of the politics of migration. Racialization of jobs in the UAE promotes South Asians as workers primarily associated with occupations that are considered dirty or dangerous, such as construction and domestic work (Goldthorpe, 2012). Even in other sectors, pay scales are based on racial discrimination wherein Emirati nationals and Western expatriates receive the highest wages and workers from the Indian subcontinent receive the lowest (Sabban, 2004).

Thus, racial discrimination in the UAE is an overt and recognizable factor in social, economic, and political life, whereas racism in the US often takes on a more covert role, hidden behind political correctness and calls for color-blindness (Coates, 2011). While the US has legislation in place to combat discrimination, racial inequality is accepted as the norm in UAE society. One way of coping with this inequality is through dress. As attire in the UAE is considered a reflection of one's nationality, and subsequently may represent one's place in the society; wearing the hijab and abaya (a long cloak) in a Gulf Arab style can elevate a woman's status in the public sphere (Omair, 2009). Thus, contrary to the way that the hijab is portrayed in

Western societies, wearing the hijab in the UAE imparts upon the wearer the favorable characteristics associated with being a Muslim woman (Pasha-Zaidi, 2014).

Despite the large international population in some parts of the UAE such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the social system is highly stratified and self-segregation among South Asians is common (Vora 2008, 2011). "The ability to self-segregate and to police the boundaries of their communities was something that Indian elites preferred about Dubai, in contrast to Western countries, where they felt the cultural identities of their children would be threatened" (Vora, 2011). However, self-segregation is not limited to South Asians in the UAE. The development of ethnic communities and neighborhoods in the US may reflect not only the social and economic concerns of new immigrants, but the desire to self-segregate for the preservation of cultural identities. Although the metropolitan areas in the US are the most diverse, this does not necessarily mean that they are the least segregated. In fact, studies of group-specific segregation indicate that the areas with the greatest number of a particular group also tend to be the most segregated (Iceland, 2004; Burgess, Wilson, & Lupton, 2005). This is similar to the context of UAE metropolitan areas where large international populations lead parallel lives, yet may have little knowledge or understanding of each other. Thus, the variant forms of self-segregation in both the US and the UAE may contribute to stereotyping and discrimination as it lessens the opportunities for intergroup contact.

Data Collection

While a great deal of research has been gathered using student populations due to the relative ease of data collection (Foot and Sanford, 2004), the current project wanted to reach out to respondents from a variety of demographic backgrounds within South Asian communities in both the US and the UAE. In order to do this, an online survey tool was employed. Participants were recruited through social networking sites, university listservs, and emails to Islamic centers in the US, as well as emails to South Asian women's associations both in the US and the UAE. Researchers attempting to study Islamic religiosity have reported difficulty in recruiting participants after the 9/11 attacks due to the nature of the questions and the fear within American Muslim communities that the research may be used to disparage the religion or its followers (Jana-Masri and Priester, 2007; Rippy and Newman, 2008). Thus, an additional snowball sampling technique was employed wherein the researcher sent a recruitment email to personal acquaintances asking them to forward it to others who fit the criteria. This technique was used successfully by previous studies involving recruitment of Muslim populations (Ghumman and Jackson, 2010; Mohammadi, Jones, and Evans, 2008; Jana-Masri and Priester, 2007; Peek, 2005).

Participants

A total of 713 participants logged onto the surveygizmo website, with 377 completing the survey. As this project focused solely on the perceptions of South Asian Muslim women, 16 participants who indicated an ethnic background other than South Asian were eliminated from data analysis. Additionally, 20 participants were further eliminated from the data set because they indicated that they were under 18. The final count was 341 completed surveys. Participants

were asked to identify themselves as "hijabi" or "non-hijabi" and data analysis was based on this self-reported group affiliation.

The mean age of US participants (n=198) was 28.2 years with 98% of the participants between the ages of 18 and 50. Eighty-one percent indicated their Islamic sect as Sunni and 13.6% reported being Shi'a. Forty-four percent were hijabi. The majority of US participants were born either in the US or in Pakistan (38.9% and 31.8% respectively). With regard to educational level attained, 76.8% indicated that they had earned either a Bachelor's degree or a Master's degree, 12.1% had a Doctoral degree and 10.1% had some college education. The employment status indicated 60.6% were employed either full-time (41.9%) or part-time (18.7%) and 38.9% indicated that they were not presently employed. Of the participants who reported a household income, 63% reported a monthly household income of at least 5,000USD and another 17.5% reported a household income between 3,000USD and 5,000USD per month. The median US income, according to the 2012 US Census, was approximately 4,200USD per month (Noss, 2013). Thus, a majority of US respondents were either within or above the median income range.

The mean age of UAE participants (n=143) was 26.2 years, with 98.6% of participants between 18 and 50 years of age. Unlike the U.S. sample where the majority was non-hijabi, 57.3% of the UAE participants were hijabi. Regarding place of birth, 60.1% of the participants were born in Pakistan and 16.8% were born in the U.A.E. In terms of educational attainment, 77.7% of the respondents had earned either a Bachelor's degree or a Master's degree (39.9% and 37.8% respectively); 16.8% reported having some college education and 3.5% indicated that they had earned a Doctorate degree. Regarding employment status, 51.8% of the participants were employed either full-time (44.1%) or part-time (7.7%), whereas 44.8% were not presently employed. Of those reporting a household income, 59% reported a monthly household income of at least 10,000AED ($2,700), with 24.9% reporting a monthly income of over 35,000AED ($9,500) per month. Another 34% reported a monthly income below 10,000AED. The most recent data published on household income in the UAE was provided by 2008 Household Budget Survey by the Department of Economic Development. As incomes in the UAE vary by nationality, the median monthly income of Asian expatriates was approximately 10,800AED ($3000); the median monthly income of Europeans and Americans was approximately 40,000USD ($11,000); and the median monthly income of Emirati locals was approximately 47,000AED ($13,000). Thus, a majority of participants in the current study were within the median income range of Asian expatriates.

As the US and the UAE were chosen as mainstream contexts, the immigration and citizenship status of respondents was also requested. Eighty-one percent of US participants indicated the US as their country of citizenship and 87% reported having lived in the US for over 10 years. Another 7% reported having lived in the US for over 5 years. Thus, a majority of US respondents had spent a considerable amount of time in the country. In terms of UAE respondents, 60% indicated Pakistan as their country of citizenship and 37% reported having lived in the UAE for over 10 years; 29% had lived in the UAE for 1-5 years and another 24% indicated that they had lived in the UAE for 5-10 years. Thus, there was a greater variability in the amount of time spent in country for UAE participants as compared to US participants. This reflects the nature of immigrant versus expatriate experience.

Methods and Materials

The first section of the survey addressed the demographic characteristics of the participants and the second section evaluated participants' perceived discrimination using an adapted version of the Perceived Religious Discrimination Scale developed by Jasperse (2009) for use with Muslim women in New Zealand. The Perceived Religious Discrimination Scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.92) used 8 items to assess participants' experience of the frequency of discrimination; 5 of the items had been taken from Noh and Kasper's (2003) perceived discrimination scale with a supplementary section requesting respondents to report on the categories of people from whom they felt discrimination (colleagues, neighbors, service people, or strangers). The same items were used by this study with the addition of two more categories of possible groups by whom respondents may have experienced discrimination: "Other Muslims" and "Other South Asians". As Jasperse (2009) noted the lack of information on intensity of discrimination as a limitation of her study, a further section was added to the Perceived Religious Discrimination Scale in the current study to explore the intensity of discrimination "at work", "in your neighborhood", "at the store", "at Muslim gatherings", "at the park" and "at the doctor's office." These locations were chosen because they aligned well with the sources of discrimination addressed in this study. Higher scores on the scale denoted greater levels of perceived discrimination.

Results

The first objective of the present study was to identify some of the demographic and attitudinal factors associated with being a South Asian Muslim woman in the US and the UAE. In order to address this goal, participants were asked to provide information about their hijab habits (under what circumstances they would wear hijab and if/why they would consider removing their hijab in public), the social group with whom they felt most comfortable, the religious affiliation of their friends, and their awareness of any negative stereotypes associated with either wearing or not wearing the hijab as a Muslim woman. These categories were chosen in order to provide a context for their experiences of perceived discrimination in their country of residence.

US Demographics

Among the US participants, 62% reported wearing a hijab during prayer; 51.6% reported wearing the hijab at the masjid; and 20.7% reported wearing the hijab at Muslim gatherings. When asked if they would consider removing their hijab in public, 83.1% said no. Reasons for not removing the hijab included religious obligation, identity and personal comfort, whereas reasons for removing the hijab focused on personal choice, questioning its religious necessity, and blending in to avoid possible negative effects from the mainstream population. With regards to the social group with which US participants felt most comfortable, 42.4% reported being most comfortable with Muslims; 37.4 % indicated that they were most comfortable with people of their own ethnic background, regardless of religious affiliation; and 9.6% reported feeling most comfortable with non-Muslims. In terms of identifying the religious affiliation of their friends, 50.5% reported that most of their friends were Muslims; 23.8% reported having some Muslim friends; 10.2% indicated that all of their friends were Muslims; and 15.5% reported having only

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a few Muslim friends. Of the US participants who responded to this question, only one reported having no Muslim friends.

In terms of awareness of negative stereotypes in the US, 89.8% indicated that they were aware of negative stereotypes of hijabis and 43.9% indicated that they were aware of negative stereotypes of non-hijabis. Additionally, 63.6% felt that they belonged to a group that is discriminated against in the US. Participants who responded in the affirmative to this question were further prompted to indicate the reason(s) they felt discriminated. Participants were allowed to choose one or more of the options provided. Of the choices provided, 62.6% chose religion as the reason for discrimination, either as a sole factor or as one of the factors listed; 34.3 chose race or color; 23.7% checked ethnicity; 20.2% checked nationality; and 18.7% checked gender. Age, sexuality, disability and other were each checked by less than 2% of the participants, indicating that participants did not feel highly discriminated against in these areas.

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to test for significant demographic differences between hijabis and non-hijabis in the US sample. Results indicated significant differences between hijabis and non-hijabis for education level, t (196) = 2.15, p <.05, and gross personal income, t (196) = 2.19, p <.05, with non-hijabi participants reporting a higher education level and a higher gross personal income than hijabi participants. There were also significant differences between hijabis and non-hijabis regarding the group with which they felt most comfortable, t (196) = 3.02, p <.05, and the number of close friends that were Muslims, t (196) = -3.71, p <.05. A cross-tabulation of the variables showed that a majority of non-hijabis (53.1%) chose South Asians, regardless of religious affiliation, as the group they felt most comfortable with, whereas a majority of the hijabis (68.2%) chose Muslims as the group they felt most comfortable with.

UAE Demographics

Among the UAE participants, 40.6% reported wearing hijab during prayer; 30.8% reported wearing the hijab at Muslim gatherings; and 21.7% indicated that they wore the hijab at the masjid. In response to the question about their willingness to remove the hijab if they wore it regularly in public, 74.8% responded no and only 2.1% responded yes. With regards to the social group with whom UAE participants felt most comfortable, 58.7% of the participants reported that they feel most comfortable with Muslims; 29.4% felt most comfortable with people of their own ethnic background regardless of religious affiliation, and 2.8% felt most comfortable with non-Muslims. Although the question asked respondents to only indicate one of the categories listed above, a small number chose two or more categories: 3.5% indicated that they felt most comfortable with South Asians and Muslims and 2.1% reported feeling most comfortable with all of the groups mentioned. In terms of the religious affiliation of their friends, a majority of respondents (88.2%) reported that most or all of their friends were Muslims (49.7% and 38.5% respectively).

Regarding awareness of negative stereotypes in the UAE, the majority of respondents (63.6%) indicated no awareness of negative stereotypes of hijabis. Similarly, 60.1% indicated no awareness of negative stereotypes of non-hijabis in the UAE and 67% felt that they did not belong to a group that is discriminated against in their country of residence. Of the 24.5% that felt discrimination against their group, the majority reported discrimination based on nationality (71.4%) either as a sole factor or in combination with other factors, followed by ethnicity

(28.6%), language (22.9%), and race (20%). Those who felt discrimination due to their religion were 14.3% of the participants, whereas 11.4% checked gender and another 11.4% checked other. None of the participants chose age, sexuality or disability as a basis of discrimination in the UAE.

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to test for significant demographic differences between hijabis and non-hijabis in the UAE sample. Significant differences were found between hijabis and non-hijabis with regards to employment, t (141) =3.40, p <.05, and personal income, t (141) =3.39, p <.05, with non-hijabis more likely to be employed as well as earn a higher income than hijabis in the UAE. Like the US sample, there was also a significant difference between hijabis and non-hijabis regarding the group with which they felt most comfortable, t (141) = 3.31, p < .05, and the number of their close friends that were Muslim, t(141) = -4.42, p < .05. A cross-tabulation of the variables showed that 78% of hijabis felt most comfortable with Muslims, whereas 82% of non-hijabis were divided between Muslims and South Asians regardless of religious affiliation.

Comparison of US and UAE Demographics

An independent samples t-test was used to compare the demographic information between participants in the US and the UAE. As expected, significant differences were found between the US participants and the UAE participants in a number of variables including age, t (359) = 4.40, p < .01, education level, t (359) = 4.51, p < .01, and employment, t (359) = 2.04, p < .05. US participants were generally older, more educated and more likely to be employed than UAE participants. Even though there were significantly more hijabis in the UAE sample than in the US sample, t (359) = -3.42, p < .01, there was more awareness of negative stereotypes of hijab among the US participants than among the UAE participants, t (351) = 14.22, p < .01. Additionally, the US sample had significantly greater awareness of belonging to a discriminated group than the UAE sample, t (345) = 7.20, p < .01.

Perceived Discrimination among Hijabis and Non-Hijabis

One-way ANOVAs were conducted to study perceived discrimination among hijabis and non-hijabis. The results showed that in the US, hijabis reported higher levels of perceived discrimination than non-hijabis but not at a statistically significant level, F (1, 161) = 3.45, p > .05. The results further showed that non-hijabis in the UAE reported greater ratings of perceived discrimination than hijabis, and this was at a significant level, F (1, 90) = 5.53, p < .05. The results of the ANOVA are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: ANOVA Results for Discrimination by Hijab and by Country

	df	F	η^2	Sig.
US				
Between Groups	1	3.45	.02	0.07
Within Groups	161			
Total	162			
UAE				
Between Groups	1	5.53*	.06	0.02
Within Groups	90			
Total	91			

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

A between groups ANOVA was further conducted to test for significant differences in total perceived discrimination between US participants and UAE participants. Total perceived discrimination was determined by adding the frequency, source, and intensity items which were then divided by the total number of items in the perceived discrimination scale to maintain the 5-point Likert values of the original items. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in perceived discrimination scores between US and UAE participants, $F(1, 253) = 64.05$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .169$. US participants perceived more total discrimination than UAE participants. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 representing "little or no discrimination" and 5 representing "a great deal of discrimination"), the mean score for total perceived discrimination among UAE participants was 1.5 ($SD=0.5$); whereas, the mean score for total perceived discrimination among US participants was 2.1 ($SD=0.6$).

Frequency, Source and Intensity of Perceived Discrimination

Frequency of Perceived Discrimination

A mixed ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in the frequency of types of perceived discrimination. The data were split into US and UAE participants and then split again into hijabi and non-hijabi participants prior to conducting the analysis. Analysis of between subjects effects revealed a statistically significant main effect of country of residence, $F(1, 292) = 74.43$, $p < .001$, $\eta2 = .201$, as well as a statistically significant interaction effect of personal hijab status and country of residence, $F(1, 292) = 3.99$, $p < .05$, $\eta2 = .011$. Analysis of within subjects effects revealed a statistically significant main effect of type of discrimination, $F(5.87, 1714.74) = 17.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta2 = .054$ and a statistically significant interaction effect of type of discrimination and country of residence, $F(5.87, 1714.74) = 6.65$, $p < .001$, $\eta2 = .021$. Mixed ANOVA results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: ANOVA Results for Frequency of Discrimination by Country

Source	df	F	η^2	p
Between Subjects				
Country (C)	1	74.43**	.201	.000
Hijabi (H)	1	.074	.000	.786
H X C	1	3.99*	.011	.047
Error	292	(4.52)		
Within Subjects				
Type (T)	5.87	17.10**	.054	.000
T x C	5.87	6.65**	.021	.000
T x H	5.87	1.92	.006	.076
T x C x H	5.87	.82	.003	.552
Error	1714.74	(.423)		

Note: Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors
* $p < .05$ **$p < .01$

Hijabis and non-hijabis in the US reported a higher frequency of discrimination than hijabis and non-hijabis in the UAE. US participants reported being "treated with suspicion", being "excluded or ignored" or being "treated as inferior" more frequently than being "threatened or harassed". Similarly, UAE participants reported being "treated rudely", being "treated as inferior", or being "excluded or ignored" most frequently. In the US, hijabi participants reported greater frequency of discrimination than non-hijabi participants; in the UAE, non-hijabi participants reported greater frequency of discrimination than hijabi participants, except in the case of being "insulted or called names" where hijabi participants reported greater frequency of discrimination, and in the case of being "treated with suspicion" where both groups reported the same frequency of discrimination. The means and standard deviations for frequency of types of perceived discrimination are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the Frequency of Types of Perceived Discrimination by South Asian Muslim Women by US and UAE

Type	Participants	Country	Mean	SD	N
Treated rudely	Hijabi	US	2.6	0.8	79
		UAE	1.7	1.1	65
	Non-hijabi	US	2.4	0.8	101
		UAE	1.9	1.1	51
Treated disrespectfully	Hijabi	US	2.5	0.8	79
		UAE	1.6	1.0	65
	Non-hijabi	US	2.4	0.8	101
		UAE	1.8	1.0	51
Receive poor service	Hijabi	US	2.5	0.9	79
		UAE	1.6	0.9	65
	Non-hijabi	US	2.3	0.8	101
		UAE	1.9	0.9	51
Treated as inferior	Hijabi	US	2.7	0.9	79
		UAE	1.7	1.0	65
	Non-hijabi	US	2.5	0.9	101
		UAE	1.9	1.0	51
Insulted or called names	Hijabi	US	2.4	1.0	79
		UAE	1.6	1.0	65
	Non-hijabi	US	2.1	0.9	101
		UAE	1.5	0.9	51
Threatened or harassed	Hijabi	US	2.2	0.8	79
		UAE	1.4	0.9	65
	Non-hijabi	US	2.1	0.9	101
		UAE	1.6	0.9	51
Treated with suspicion	Hijabi	US	3.1	0.9	79
		UAE	1.7	1.1	65
	Non-hijabi	U.S	2.7	1.2	101
		UAE	1.7	1.0	51
Excluded or ignored	Hijabi	US	2.7	1.0	79
		UAE	1.7	1.0	65
	Non-hijabi	US	2.5	0.9	101
		UAE	1.8	0.9	51

Sources of Perceived Discrimination

Another mixed ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in the sources of discrimination against South Asian Muslim women in the US and the UAE and between those who wear a hijab and those who do not. Analysis of between groups effects

revealed a significant main effect of country of residence, F (1, 299) = 30.25, $p < .001$, η2 = .091. Within groups effects revealed a significant main effect of source of discrimination, F (3.96, 1184.42) = 18.74, $p < .001$, η2 = .057, as well as a significant interaction effect of source of discrimination and country of residence, F (3.96, 1184.42) = 4.26, $p < .01$, η2 = .013, and a significant interaction effect of source of discrimination with country of residence and personal hijab status, F (3.96, 1184.42) = 3.57, $p < .01$, η2 = .011. Table 4 shows the ANOVA results for sources of perceived discrimination.

Table 4: ANOVA Results for Sources of Discrimination by Country and by Hijabi

Source	df	F	$η^2$	p
Between Subjects				
Country (C)	1	30.25**	.091	.000
Hijabi (H)	1	.32	.001	.570
H X C	1	2.09	.006	.150
Error	299	(3.02)		
Within Subjects				
Source (S)	3.96	18.74**	.057	.000
S x C	3.96	4.26**	.013	.002
S X H	3.96	1.98	.006	.096
S X C X H	3.96	3.57**	.011	.007
Error	1184.42	(.626)		

Note: Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors
* p < .05   **p < .01

In the US, participants indicated that they were most likely to face discrimination from strangers, followed by other Muslims or other South Asians and least likely to face discrimination from colleagues or neighbors. In the UAE, participants indicated that they were most likely to face discrimination from other South Asians, followed by strangers or other Muslims and least likely to face discrimination from neighbors or service people. In the US, hijabis reported more discrimination from service people and strangers, whereas non-hijabis reported more discrimination from other Muslims and other South Asians. There was no difference in reported discrimination from colleagues or neighbors among hijabis and non-hijabis in the US. In the UAE, non-hijabis reported more discrimination than hijabis from neighbors, service people, strangers, other Muslims and other South Asians. There was no difference in reported discrimination from colleagues among hijabis and non-hijabis in the UAE. The means and standard deviations for sources of perceived discrimination are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for the Sources of Perceived Discrimination Reported by South Asian Muslim Women by U.S and UAE

Source	Country	Participants	*Mean*	*SD*	*N*
Colleagues	US	Hijabi	1.9	0.9	78
		Non-hijabi	1.9	1.0	106
	UAE	Hijabi	1.7	1.0	72
		Non-hijabi	1.7	1.1	47
Neighbors	US	Hijabi	1.9	0.9	78
		Non-hijabi	1.9	0.9	106
	UAE	Hijabi	1.4	0.8	72
		Non-hijabi	1.5	0.9	47
Service people	US	Hijabi	2.2	1.0	78
		Non-hijabi	2.0	0.9	106
	UAE	Hijabi	1.4	0.9	72
		Non-hijabi	1.7	1.0	47
Strangers	US	Hijabi	2.7	0.9	78
		Non-hijabi	2.3	1.0	106
	UAE	Hijabi	1.7	1.0	72
		Non-hijabi	2.0	1.0	47
Other Muslims	US	Hijabi	2.1	1.0	78
		Non-hijabi	2.4	1.0	106
	UAE	Hijabi	1.6	1.0	72
		Non-hijabi	1.9	0.9	47
Other South Asians	US	Hijabi	2.2	1.0	78
		Non-hijabi	2.3	0.9	106
	UAE	Hijabi	1.8	1.1	72
		Non-hijabi	2.0	1.0	47

Intensity of Perceived Discrimination

A mixed ANOVA was also conducted to test for significant differences between the places where participants felt the greatest intensity of discrimination (Table 6). Between groups effects showed a significant main effect of country of residence, $F (1, 289) = 27.41$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .085$, as well as a significant interaction effect of personal hijab status and country of residence, $F (1, 289) = 9.26$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .021$. Within groups effects showed a significant main effect of intensity of discrimination, $F (3.93, 1136.97) = 17.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .055$, as well as a

significant interaction effect of intensity of discrimination and country of residence, F (3.93, 1136.97) = 2.64, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .008$ and a significant interaction effect of intensity of discrimination and personal hijab status, F (3.93, 1136.97) = 5.93, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .019$. Table 6 shows the ANOVA results for intensity of discrimination at various places.

Table 6: ANOVA Results for the Intensity of Perceived Discrimination Reported at Various Places by Country and by Participant Hijab Status

Source	df	F	η^2	p
	Between Subjects			
Country (C)	1	27.41**	.085	.000
Hijabi (H)	1	.02	.000	.903
H X C	1	9.26*	.021	.010
Error	289	(1.39)		
	Within Subjects			
Intensity (I)	3.93	17.30**	.055	.000
I x C	3.93	2.64*	.008	.034
I X H	3.93	5.93**	.019	.000
I X C X H	3.93	2.19	.007	.070
Error	1136.97	(.404)		

Note: Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors
* $p < .05$ **$p < .01$

Participants in the US reported greater intensity of discrimination than participants in the UAE. Both the US and UAE participants reported feeling the greatest intensity of discrimination "at work", but in the US, hijabis felt more intense discrimination than non-hijabis in all the places listed. The only exception was "at Muslim gatherings" where non-hijabis in the US reported more intensity of discrimination. In the UAE, on the other hand, non-hijabis reported more intensity of discrimination. The only exception was "at work" where hijabis in the UAE felt more intense discrimination. The means and standard deviations for intensity of perceived discrimination are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for the Intensity of Perceived Discrimination Reported at Various Places by South Asian Muslim Women by US and UAE

Place	Participants	Country	*Mean*	*SD*	*N*
At work	Hijabi	US	1.9	0.8	77
		UAE	1.6	0.9	63
	Non-hijabi	US	1.7	0.9	108
		UAE	1.5	0.8	45
In your neighborhood	Hijabi	US	1.8	0.8	77
		UAE	1.3	0.5	63
	Non-hijabi	US	1.5	0.7	108
		UAE	1.4	0.6	45
At the store	Hijabi	US	1.9	0.9	77
		UAE	1.1	0.4	63
	Non-hijabi	US	1.6	0.7	108
		UAE	1.4	0.7	45
At Muslim gatherings	Hijabi	US	1.6	0.7	77
		UAE	1.2	0.5	63
	Non-hijabi	US	1.8	1.0	108
		UAE	1.6	0.9	45
At the park	Hijabi	US	1.6	0.7	77
		UAE	1.2	0.4	63
	Non-hijabi	US	1.3	0.6	108
		UAE	1.4	0.7	45
At the doctor's office	Hijabi	US	1.4	0.7	77
		UAE	1.1	0.4	63
	Non-hijabi	US	1.3	0.6	108
		UAE	1.2	0.5	45

Discussion

Muslim women in the present study, regardless of their personal hijab status, perceived more discrimination in the US than in the UAE. Participants in the US sample reported more frequency and intensity of discrimination and a greater awareness of belonging to a discriminated group than participants in the UAE sample. They also reported that the greatest

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reason for discrimination in the US was religion, followed by race or color, and ethnicity. In the UAE, on the other hand, the greatest reason for discrimination was reported to be nationality, followed by ethnicity, language, and race or color.

In the UAE, as one's passport has a direct relation to the employment package that an expatriate receives, the perception of participants in the present study that nationality forms the basis of the greatest degree of discrimination in the UAE is supported by existing information on the labor market conditions of expatriate workers in the region. Among the US participants, the suggestion that Muslim women feel their religion provides the greatest degree of discrimination is also supported by extant literature. A plethora of media reports and scholarly articles have focused on the issue of hijab, for example, as a marker of "otherness" in Western societies (Gole, 2003; Ruby, 2006; Droogsma, 2007) and a great deal of emphasis has been given to the rise of Islamophobia in Western countries due to the association of the religion with terrorist activities committed in the name of Islam (Read, 2007). Despite the international makeup of the population in the UAE, it is inherently an Islamic mainstream context and so, in keeping with the Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954), the tendency to make a negative association may be lessened. Thus, the findings in the present study reaffirm existing notions.

There were also significant differences in the frequency, source, and intensity of perceived discrimination in both the US and the UAE sample. US participants reported being "treated with suspicion" or being "excluded or ignored" more frequently than being "threatened or harassed" whereas UAE participants reported being "treated rudely" or "treated as inferior" most frequently. These results confirm previous findings regarding the subtle type of discrimination that Muslim women have reported (Jasperse, 2009; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, & L'Heureux Lewis, 2006; Butcher, Spoonley, & Trlin, 2006). In the current study as well, Muslim women in both the US and the UAE sample reported a more subtle form of discrimination through social exclusion or disrespect rather than direct harassment.

US participants indicated that they were most likely to face discrimination from strangers, followed by other Muslims or other South Asians and least likely to face discrimination from colleagues or neighbors. In the UAE, participants indicated that they were most likely to face discrimination from other South Asians, followed by strangers or other Muslims, and least likely to face discrimination from neighbors or service people. The high rating of strangers and the low rating of neighbors as sources of discrimination are consistent with previous research (Jasperse, 2009; Carter, 2008; Dovidio, Gaerner, & Kawakam, 2003) as well as the Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954). The findings also support prior research indicating that group discrimination is more salient than individual discrimination (Moghaddam, Stalkin & Hutcheson, 1997, as cited in Andre, Dronkers, & Fleishmann, 2010; Postmes, Branscombe, Spears, & Young, 1999) and that one may influence the other.

Perceived Discrimination within the Community
The interesting part about these results is the high rating of South Asians and Muslims as sources of discrimination in both the US and the UAE. Khattab, Johnston, Modood, and Sirkeci (2011) noted the existence of an ethnic bias in the class structure of South Asians in Britain. As a transnational community, South Asians continue to struggle with the effects of the dissolution of one nation, India, into three rival nations (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) which claim a difference in social identities based on religion and racial composition. Ethnicity and religion have formed the basis of numerous violent clashes between groups in South Asia, with political

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movements in the three nation-states using ethno-nationalism to demand greater access to resources and power in the region (Phadnis, & Ganguly, 2001).

Added to this is the notion of a South Asian diaspora that has extended beyond national boundaries through global migration, creating minority communities that must contend with developing identities in public spaces that do not necessarily reflect the mainstream social norms of their heritage countries. This is further exacerbated by new generations of South Asians that are born and bred outside the Indian subcontinent and who may be more reflective and critical of the ethnic and religious traditions of their parents. "Such modes of 'sharpening awareness' seem to be a prominent development, in one form or another, throughout many South Asian religious communities overseas. It is a trend common to diasporas, fostered by self-reflection stimulated amongst minorities in contexts of ethnic and religious pluralism" (Vertovec, 1997). In Dwyer's study of British South Asian Muslim women (2000), participants noted that they were required to prioritize their multiple identities (British, Asian, Pakistani, Muslim) in their daily interactions, and dress was one instrument they used to construct alternative identities. Thus, Western attire that conformed to Islamic norms of modesty (shirt, trousers, and headscarf) was preferred over traditional Pakistani clothes, creating a hybrid fashion statement that expressed their multiple identities. Similarly, Ali (2008) found that dress played an important role among the increasing population of de-acculturalists in the US. However, in this case, the choice of hijab and jilbab (long overcoat) was used to reject American norms in favor of a "pure" Islamic identity.

Members of diasporas thus consciously negotiate their connections to their homeland as well as their collective and individual identities in their country of residence. In this process, the diversity and heterogeneity of the homeland is often glossed over and becomes more one-dimensional, while the interplay between the home culture and the mainstream culture is given priority. As a result, outdated traditions may be kept alive in order to maintain a line of demarcation between home culture and mainstream culture. With the South Asian diaspora in the US, in particular, attempts may be made by the community to maintain the "model minority" image, which ends up endorsing a singular image of South Asians as a homogenous group. As guardians of culture and religion, South Asian women are often held responsible for upholding and passing down the spiritual, traditional, and cultural group identity (Bhatia, 2007; Dwyer, 2000). Although this burden also falls on South Asian women in their homelands, it may play a more pointed role in diasporas. "On the one hand, they have to face racial discrimination from the larger American society and prejudice as brown, minority women, but on the other hand, they have to deal with the oppression in their own communities" (Bhatia, 2007). Given these phenomena with respect to South Asian diasporas, the results of the present study provide additional evidence of the ethnic and religious struggles within South Asian Muslim communities.

The demographic profile of hijabi and non-hijabi participants showed some significant differences in terms of education, income level, and friendship preferences. Hijabis in both countries tended to prefer Muslim friends, whereas non-hijabis either preferred South Asian friends (US sample) or were divided in terms of preferences for Muslims and other South Asians regardless of their religious affiliation (UAE sample). This finding supports the notion that wearing hijab promotes a religious identity and may actually reinforce friendships that support a religious identity over a cultural one. The finding that non-hijabis in both countries indicated a greater intensity of perceived discrimination at Muslim gatherings supports existing literature on

the pressure within the Muslim community to conform to a dress code that more readily represents an Islamic identity (Hussein, 2007; Ho & Dreher, 2007; Ali, 2008). The income and educational level of participants may also have had an effect on the choice of friends and thus an effect on the level of perceived discrimination. However, the current study did not focus on these areas, so future research may want to delve further into the implications of these factors and how they may affect group processes and perceived discrimination within South Asian and Muslim communities.

From a mental health perspective, the perception that a great deal of discrimination comes from within Muslim and South Asian communities can perhaps lessen the positive impact that ethnic identity may otherwise have as a buffer against perceived discrimination from outside sources (Mossakowski, 2003). Although this aspect was not explored in the current study, it is an important consideration for future research. As the participants in the present study felt most comfortable socializing with Muslims or other South Asians, further research may want to study how intragroup discrimination affects the mental and physical well-being of minority populations.

Intensity of Discrimination

With regard to intensity of discrimination, both US and UAE participants reported feeling the greatest intensity of discrimination at work, with hijabis reporting greater intensity of discrimination than non-hijabis. The extant literature on hijab and the American workplace supports these findings. Ghumman and Ryan (2013), for example, found evidence of formal and interpersonal discrimination against hijabis in the workplace, especially in organizations with less diversity among employees. Reeves, Kinney, and Azam (2012) noted that hijabis perceived greater intolerance and less employment opportunities in healthcare professions, which supports Ghumman and Jackson's (2010) study that hijabis have lower expectations of receiving job offers than non-hijabis. Less research, however, has been done on hijab and employability in Islamic contexts. Pasha-Zaidi, Masson, and Pennington (2014) noted a tendency for group cohesion in terms of hijabis' and non-hijabis' perceptions of employability in the UAE. Even though hijabis in the UAE may consider that women wearing hijab are more employable, they may still perceive greater discrimination within the work environment. As the UAE's international population is greatly based on residency obtained through employment (Mellahi & Forstenlechner, 2011), it is plausible that the work environment is more reflective of Western ideals which may place hijabis at a disadvantage. More research needs to be done to better understand the relationship between hijab and employment in Muslim contexts.

Although non-hijabis may feel less discrimination at work in the UAE, they reported greater intensity of discrimination in all other places studied. This may be a reflection of the Islamic mainstream context in the UAE where hijab is valued in social spaces. This is further demonstrated among the US participants where the one place that non-hijabis felt a greater intensity of discrimination than hijabis was in Muslim gatherings. As hijab is often used as a litmus test of faith within Muslim communities with hijabis gaining greater prestige, it is not surprising that Muslim women who do not adhere to the headscarf in public spaces feel discrimination in social situations within Muslim contexts (Siddiqui, 2013). Interestingly, despite the negative media coverage of hijab, the headscarf is also paradoxically used by Western media to represent what "real" Muslims look like, thus propagating additional messages about the validity of hijab as the marker of authenticity for Muslim women. As increased attention is

drawn to the difficulties and discrimination that hijabis face in Western countries, their status goes up in Muslim communities for their courage to face anti-Islamic sentiment. "This is true and deserves recognition. But this is difficult to do without implying that non-hijabis are somehow lacking in courage…Refusing to wear hijab in a community where it is fast becoming a symbol of cultural loyalty can require courage, too, especially if there is strong family pressure to do so" (Hussein, 2007, pg. 13).

Perceived Discrimination Overall

Although there was a statistically significant difference in perceived discrimination between US and UAE participants in the current study, it is important to note that both sets of participants reported relatively low levels of perceived discrimination overall. This is consistent with findings by Jasperse (2009) wherein Muslim women in New Zealand also reported "'rarely' experiencing religious discrimination" (p. 46). Among US participants, the relatively low level of perceived discrimination may have been related to the "salad bowl" concept of American society wherein sociocultural differences among residents are expected and there is legal recourse for reporting discriminatory acts (Thompson, 2002; Staver, 2000; Chung & Miller, 2011).

In the UAE, on the other hand, the low level of perceived discrimination may have been a reflection of the socio-economic class of the participants. Vora (2008) described the flexibility of social identities among middle class Indians in Dubai when discussing racial discrimination in the country. "The constant slippage between 'we' and 'they'… indicated that while there were certain modes of shared identity, middle-class Indians perpetuated some of the very stereotypes about Indians that they did not like. In doing so, they removed themselves from the production of a system in which Indians get lower salaries and less respect…Thus, the necessity to distinguish among Indians was just as strong as the necessity to identify with them" (p. 392). By differentiating themselves along economic lines within their cultural group, perceptions of perceived discrimination among South Asians in the UAE may have been influenced by their conscious or unconscious association with middle and upper class expatriates, thereby sheltering them from the blatant discrimination directed at South Asians in the lower classes (Vora, 2008). Thus, it is possible that research conducted with lower class South Asians in the UAE would yield different results. Further research on discrimination within Muslim and South Asian groups is needed to understand the processes involved in this context.

Limitations

As the current study used a quantitative methodology, many questions related to the reasoning and cognitive processes of participants regarding hijab and social interactions within their groups are left for future research. Although the research attempted to limit variability due to cultural and religious factors, variances due to the social class of participants and their status as immigrants in the US versus expatriates in the UAE may account for some of the differences in their perceptions of discrimination. Also, there are inherent limitations in the use of online instruments, such as the inability to verify the demographic characteristics of participants and the exclusion of participants who may not be comfortable with the technology. However, given the goal of the research to elicit responses from two different countries, an online instrument was the most effective choice as it allowed for quicker response time and reduced paper and mailing costs (Dillman, 2000). Specific language in the online tool was used in the instructions as well as

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the survey questions to guide participants to provide accurate demographic data, and the snowballing technique where acquaintances were asked to forward emails to participants who fit the demographic profile was utilized to address this limitation.

Conclusion

Research has shown that perceived discrimination has a negative effect on physical and mental health (Pascoe & Richman, 2009). As such, it is important to understand the characteristics of perceived discrimination among stigmatized populations in different parts of the world, including the frequency, intensity and sources of discrimination. The present study adds to the existing literature by providing the perspectives of South Asian Muslim women in two mainstream contexts—a Western secular one and a modernized Islamic one. In doing so, it highlights the importance of intergroup and intragroup relationships as catalysts in the facilitation of perceived discrimination.

Combatting perceived discrimination between and within groups requires the creation and sustainability of relationships which are based on trust and mutual respect. Continued interfaith dialogue through community centers and university groups can build bridges to create more understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims in the US. The same strategy may be applied through expatriate social groups in the UAE. Having opportunities to meet with others who share common values and interests may result in more cohesive groups. Meet-Ups, which are online platforms to encourage group development and social interaction, have become increasingly popular and may provide one avenue for such ventures. The challenge, however, lies in developing ways to lessen intragroup discrimination within South Asian communities. One way of increasing group cohesiveness is by emphasizing commonalities and downplaying differences. As the onus for alleviating intragroup discrimination lies with the individuals that make up the groups, it will be interesting to see how the evolving cultural landscape influences this phenomenon in the South Asian diasporas.

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