

Islam

INTRO: Islam has been the fastest growing religion in the U.S. over the past two decades, and is predicted to become the 2nd largest by 2010

What sort of stereotypes do we have about the religion of Islam, and the Muslim people? (discuss)

- since 9/11/01, there has been a decided effort on the part of some to view Islam as the “same” as Christianity; this is an effort at political correctness.

EX: the UNC-CH controversy over requiring freshmen to read the book on the Koran

- there is a generation of Muslim Americans that has blended Muslim and American culture, the children of wealthy Muslim immigrants of the 60's

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The word “Islam” means surrender or submission; the emphasis in Islam is on obedience to Allah

“Allah” is the only God; there are three major monotheistic world religions:

- (1) Islam
- (2) Christianity – many people try to equate the “God” of these three
- (3) Judaism

“Muhammed” is the last prophet

- Islam recognizes 25 prophets, including Jesus, Abraham, Adam, Moses; God spoke directly to the prophets

“Koran” is the Muslim holy book

- the Koran has been translated into English, but in the Muslim liturgy, is only read in the original language, Arabic
- historically, the Koran was directly revealed by an angel to Muhammed, who was illiterate

DEMOGRAPHICS

All Muslims are not Arab; the three largest Muslim countries are

- (1) Indonesia
- (2) Pakistan
- (3) Bangladesh (p.291)

There are several sub-traditions within the Muslim religion

- (1) Sunni – 80% of Muslims worldwide (70% of American Muslims)
- (2) Shi’ite – 10%; focused in Iran & Iraq
- (3) Sufi – the mystical group; actively seek to convert non-Muslims
- (4) African American – Nation of Islam (Louis Farakhan)

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

- (1) Profession of Faith (p.293) – Muslims are not tolerant of diversity; to convert to Islam, one only has to recite the profession
- (2) Ritual prayer – required 5 times daily, facing toward Mecca (east)
EX: Muslim students at CU praying on the track beside hwy 421
- (3) Almsgiving – helping the poor is a big part of Islam
- (4) Fasting – during the month of Ramadan, which commemorates the giving of the Koran
- (5) Pilgrimage to Mecca, the Holy City

PRACTICES

- (1) Family life is very important in Islam; Muslims are encouraged to marry and have children as early as possible
 - husbands are viewed as providers; wives are to take care of the home and children; husbands are allowed up to 4 wives, as long as he can take care of all of them
 - basically pro-life; abortion is not encouraged; children are
 - very male-dominated EX: birth of a son cause for celebration; birth of daughters is cause for shame and embarrassment
 - children are expected to take care of elderly parents
 - Muslims are typically private people, don't go outside the extended family for help often

COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS

- (1) Arab-American Muslims are much more likely to go to a medical doctor for a physical ailment, than to a therapist for an emotional problem. Therefore, you will see a lot of psychosomatic disorders.
- (2) They will prefer to work within the extended family unit; if a Muslim does come for therapy, will need to work with the whole family in order to be effective
 - therapists will need to understand that Muslims will have a very different view of family issues than the typical westerner (p.308)
- (3) Therapists also need to understand that for non-westernized Muslims, Islam is more than a philosophy; it is a way of life; may have a very negative view of Americans and American culture