SPECIAL SECTION

ISLAM AND MENTAL HEALTH
INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL SECTION: ISLAM AND MENTAL HEALTH: FERTILE GROUND FOR RESEARCH

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The religion and spirituality literature in the United States is dominated by research using Christian samples, and using methodologies and instruments based on western interpretations (Piedmont & Leach, 2002). Few researchers examine the role of faith on health outcomes, at least in the U.S., with Muslim (or Hindu, Buddhist, etc.) groups. Unfortunately, this leaves a theoretical and methodological bias that needs to be resolved, and because with the growth of Islam globally it becomes increasingly important that we begin to determine its influence on human behaviors. This section of Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion attempts to reduce this bias. It includes authors representing psychology, social work, nursing, and education, and research articles from six countries, including Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Pakistan, and the United States.

The purpose of this special section is to present the impact of Islam in a variety of mental health areas. A few U.S. researchers have begun to focus their research programs with Muslims in both the U.S. and the other geographic regions such as the Middle East, and some present their latest works in this special section. For example, Jana-Masri and Priester (2007) developed a Qur’an-based instrument to assess Islamic religiosity, the first of its kind in the United States. Though the psychometrics are modest, it is the first instrument not attempting to transfer western ideals of religion onto Islam, and instead, originated within an Islamic worldview. The instrument is used in the Leach, Jana-Masri, and Priester article in this special section. Examination of other instruments assessing their appropriateness with Muslim samples is also presented in this special section. Research output often increases after measurement

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