

RESILIENCE IN ARAB-AMERICAN COUPLES
IN THE WAKE OF THE TERRORIST ATTACKS
ON NEW YORK CITY: A FAMILY SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This research explored how Arab American couples found the strength and resilience that empowered them to overcome the terrorist attacks of September 11th and the aftereffects that followed. Utilizing a family resiliency model grounded in systems theory and social constructionism, I interviewed 18 Arab American couples from the New York and New Jersey areas. I applied a phenomenological method of inquiry to gather the experiences of Arab American couples in order to understand the protective processes of resilience. Couples reported fear and caution because of incidents of threats and violence against Arabs in the United States. Some couples described incidents against them.

Couples accessed a variety of resources to survive the aftereffect. These included coping skills developed during previous experiences of terror, American community support, determination, and religion. There were four major conclusions: resilient marriages, larger systems, process of identity, and religion: unify and identity. I discussed these conclusions in the context of the conceptual framework and made clinical and theoretical implications.

In memory of my mother

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