

Dr Nuha Dwaikat-Shaer

“God Made You This Way”: Ambivalent Acceptance, Relational Labor, and the Politics of Care in Queer and Trans Muslim Families

Family support and acceptance of gender and sexual diversity is vital for the well-being of queer and trans individuals. Such acceptance and support can be limited, complicated, or ambivalent across family systems, especially in ethnoreligious minority families. Grounded in intersectionality and the Family Acceptance Project framework, this study sheds light on the experiences of queer and trans Canadian Muslims and their family members.

Interviews with 30 queer and trans Canadian Muslims and their family members reveal salient family processes around support and acceptance, including both facilitators and barriers. Facilitators include education, relational salience, media representation, effective interpersonal communication, and religiosity and religious pluralism—often expressed through reframing such as “God made you this way”. Barriers include heteronormative expectations held by kin networks and ethnoreligious communities, intergenerational differences, and the absence of inclusive resources.

The interplay of these factors often results in ambivalent acceptance, where relationships are maintained through ongoing relational labour despite non-affirmation of queer or trans identity. This research advances a critical, care-centred perspective on Muslim family systems, moving beyond binary models of acceptance/rejection. These findings hold important implications for researchers, social service providers, and mental health professionals who engage with LGBTQIA+ populations, especially those of ethnoreligious diverse backgrounds.



Dr Nuha Dwaikat-Shaer

Wilfrid Laurier University

Nuha Dwaikat-Shaer is an Assistant Professor at the Lyle S. Hallman Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University. As an interdisciplinary scholar-architect, her research program interrogates how colonial, legal, and pedagogical powers operate to perpetuate settler colonialism, racial violence, and epistemic erasure. Her critical scholarship is grounded in *Istinhād* (awakening for justice) and *Sumūd* (steadfastness), frameworks through which she examines how marginalized communities reclaim agency within exclusionary systems.

Dr Dwaikat-Shaer's recent work directly addresses the “Palestine Exception” and the complicity of social work academe, with ongoing research investigating the impact of the Gaza genocide on Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students and scholars. Her portfolio spans the study of domicile (home destruction as a tool of colonial warfare), migrant legal precarity, and decolonizing pedagogical praxis. With over twenty years of community-engaged experience in Palestine and Canada, Dr. Dwaikat-Shaer bridges architectural, social work, and pedagogical praxis to advance research that not only documents oppression but actively cultivates resistance, solidarity, and transformative justice. Her contributions to this conference extend this lens to the domestic sphere, analyzing the relational labor and ambivalent acceptance navigated by queer and trans Muslim families.