RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY: ARAB AMERICANS IN THE CHICAGOLAND AREA

By

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To el Mama and el Baba
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and Collective Identities</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Palestinian Diaspora</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Building of a Community</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics of Participants</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections of an insider – “She’s Arab? . . But Her Name is Claudia!”</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Exploratory Study</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 THE 9/11-GENERATION: AN ARAB AMERICAN MILLENNIAL EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Internalization of the Self</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings and Analysis</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 WHITE BY LAW: INVOLUNTARY RACE CATEGORIES AND ETHNIC IDENTITY</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and Racial Classifications</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and Ethnic Identity Formation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings and Analysis</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Selections: White versus Other</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and Religious Characteristics</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Advantages: “There’s no flaw to them.”</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Disadvantage: “I Am Not White!”</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form-Dependent</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of the State in the Racial Selection Process</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situating Racial Identity into a Broader Context</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Importance of Religious Identity</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 ARAB AND PALESTINIAN IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Formation Process</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1</td>
<td>Interviewees and identity card selections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-1</td>
<td>Arab Ancestry in the Chicagoland Area</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-1</td>
<td>The Chicago Metropolitan area falls under the Cook County. Included in the Arab American Institute’s (2010) definition are Assyrians, Palestinians, and Jordanians – those who identify as having an Arab-speaking ancestry.</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-1</td>
<td>Between 1980 and 2008, the Arab American population (Assyrians, Palestinians, Jordanians) nearly tripled. The largest Arab population is noted as Palestinian. Accounting for “ancestry” data in the Census began in 1980.</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY: ARAB AMERICANS IN THE CHICAGOLAND AREA

By

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Chair: Tamir Sorek
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The areas of ethnic and racial formation are classic to the discipline of sociology, as they contribute to the understanding of group cohesiveness and migration patterns. The social integration patterns of the Arab population, in particular, reveal an interesting phenomenon. Arabs are characterized as white, according to the Office of Management and Budget and the United States Census, along with descendants from Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Historically, people who have been considered as white have benefited from white privileges. Although categorized into a dominant white racial classification, Arabs are socially perceived as an “other” or “outsider” alongside stereotypes associating the Arab label with anti-American sentiments. This dissertation examines the ethnic identity formation and how it has been experienced, displayed, negotiated and evolved, among second generation Arab Americans in the Chicagoland area – both in a suburban, highly populated Arab space, and an urban, less populated Arab setting. The main questions addressed in this research are: How is ethnic identity attained and negotiated among individuals of Arab ancestry in an American context? And, how does this differ by generational status?
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

I’m a lot more liberal than my parents… it’s probably more geared towards freedom. I’m more liberal. I want rights for everyone no matter what. For me, if I were to ever go into politics, I would not go off a religion. [If] my parents were to go into politics it would be right from the religion. So growing up here kind of taught me more about being liberal. Definitely in these years, being geared more towards freedom… I’m a typical American teenager besides the excessive drinking and smoking that most of them do. Just my thought process is probably different from my parents. I’m a lot more open-minded…. I’m not judgmental… I’m into pop culture a lot, and music, the movies. There’s a sex scene in every movie, and I’m fine with that, I think it’s actually kind of artistic, if it’s done correctly. They don’t have that in Arabic shows, they don’t kiss and hug. I’m more open-minded to these things…

- Anton, 18 years old, Palestinian ancestry

Anton articulates his position as a “typical American teenager” growing up in the United States. In doing so, he expresses various ways in which he deviates from and identifies with his parents and/or his American counterparts. These inter-generational and ethnic distinctions serve as a way to understand the second-generation experience. Anton’s response encompasses his familial, political, religious, and ethnic viewpoints as he compares them to his surrounding audience. The overwhelming number of children of Palestinian immigrants in this study echo Anton’s position. They navigate their ethno-religious and American identities and communicate how they make sense of it.

This research study is set to determine how group ethnic boundaries are created, shaped and experienced by the children of Palestinian immigrants in the Chicagoland area (Chicago’s southwest suburb, Bridgeview, and throughout the north and northwest sub/urban areas). Uncovering the cultural values and group membership in relation to the demographics in which one is immersed contributes to the understanding of identity formation. Therefore, in addition to exploring the identity development of the second
generation, it is equally important to ask how this population adapts to their social surroundings.

The racial and ethnic identity formation of Arab Americans should warrant the attention of social scientists for a few reasons. According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Arabs are categorized as white despite their social and political marginal status in the U.S., a trend that deviates from the historical construction of white racial classification in the U.S. Similarly, the case of Arab Americans illustrates an interesting contrast, considering the ethnic group has a stigmatized social identity yet they show economic prosperity in the United States. Arab Americans are wealthier and better educated than the average American, with a higher likelihood of males in the labor force than the U.S. male population (U.S. Census 2005). Despite these positive signs of integration, Arab Americans have historically experienced a stigmatized ethnic identity (Said 1979) and significantly greater discrimination after the 9/11 attacks (Arab American Institute 2009; Cainkar 2006), making them an increasingly vulnerable population.

When we first moved in people were not very welcoming at all because, it was so soon after 9/11. We moved in I wanna say December of 2002, and so it was so soon after 9/11 that people found out that the house had been sold to a Muslim family, they were outraged. They actually yelled at the previous owners and said ‘how could you sell it to a Muslim family, we don’t want people like that in our neighborhood’… they [previous owners] told it to my parents.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) enumerated a total of 1.9 million people with Arab ancestry (Lebanese, Egyptian, Syrian, Palestinian, Jordanian, Moroccan, Iraqi, “Arab” or “Arabic,” Other Arab; this includes persons of Arab ancestry, and Arab and non-Arab ancestry), a figure that has increased since 1990. Nearly half are native U.S. citizens (born in the U.S. or born abroad to U.S. citizen parents), with the other half foreign born.
Most of the foreign born population immigrated to the U.S. in the 1990s, with a minority arriving before 1970. Reports indicate that the Arab diaspora in the United States is largest in ten metropolitan cities (New York, NY; Dearborn, MI; Los Angeles, CA; Chicago, IL; Houston, TX; Detroit, MI; San Diego, CA; Jersey City, NJ; Boston, MA; Jacksonville, FL), most of which are also the largest cities in the United States (U.S. Census 2005). The largest Arab ancestries in the U.S. are Lebanese, Egyptian, and Syrian, respectively. Palestinian, Moroccan, Iraqi, Jordanian, and Yemeni follow these, also in that order (U.S. Census 2013). While the largest Palestinian population is in California, the greatest concentration of Palestinians can be found in Illinois (Arab American Institute Foundation 2014). Palestinians are reported as “the oldest and largest Arab Muslim community in metropolitan Chicago” (Canikar 1999). Although there are three waves of Arab immigration to the U.S., the largest wave to Chicago occurred after the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. The population is reported as both Christians from Ramallah and Muslims from Betunia, both from West Bank, Palestine.

Arabs are scattered across Chicago, and reside in the central region of the Cook County area at seventy-three percent (Appendix D). According to the U.S. Census (2000), the Chicago Cook County area is ranked as one of five metropolitan areas in the U.S. with a high concentration of Arabs. Cook County also has the third highest Arabic-speaking population in the United States and is home to the largest Palestinian and Jordanian populations outside that of the Middle East (Arab American Institute 2009). The Palestinian population is reported as segregated in terms of religion, with Christians residing on Chicago’s northwest side, and Muslims on the southwest side (Hanania 2005).
Migration of “Syrians” (Palestine, Lebanon, Syria) to Chicago began in the late nineteenth century, during the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893. As opposed to the migration from Lebanon and Syria Christian families, the Palestinian population was predominately Muslim males who desired to work and return to Palestine. They worked as peddlers on Chicago’s south side of the city during the Great Migration, and eventually transitioned into peddlers, and shopkeepers or owner-entrepreneurs e.g. grocery stores, gas stations, or professionals by the 1990s (Cainkar 2004).

In the 1980s, the construction of the Bridgeview Foundation Mosque was complete. Islamic academic institutions, the Aqsa School Elementary and Universal High School, were built next to the mosque. Bridgeview had a growing Arab ethnic market making the institutional developments in the area an attractive space for Arab Muslims. A decade following the mosque’s construction, a higher proportion of Arabs was living in Bridgeview than in the city (Cainkar 2005). Similarly, Christian Palestinians who settled on the north side also share a religious institution, St. George, in Cicero (Cainkar 2004).

**Immigration and Collective Identities**

Arab collective identity differs by immigration patterns and the political climate of the time. Historical shifts in both the United States and Arab world have, to some extent, united and divided Arabs. The following is a brief overview of the immigration patterns and collective identities of Arabs in the United States.

Arab immigration to the United States has occurred in three waves: The first wave (1924-1947) during the depression and WWII; the second wave (1948-1966) following the Nakba adversity (a civil war between Jews and Palestinians referred to as the Arab-Israeli war); and the third wave (1967-2005) throughout internal conflict in the West Bank, Lebanon, Iraq, and Kuwait (Orfalea 2006). The rise of immigration from the
Middle East to the United States increased until the National Origins Act of 1924 (immigration was met with a quota that discriminated against groups until the 1960s). Due to this Act, only two percent of the population from a country was allowed to migrate to the United States. Early immigrants were majority Christian, however, the term Arab was first used to define the group linguistically, and later on terms of ethnic similarities and distinctions from their non-Arab counterparts in the United States.

Following World War II, the United States gained control of the oil fields in the Middle East, and U.S. officials recruited and trained Arabic speaking male students for U.S. interests. Two-thirds of the recruited population married American women and maintained their residence in the U.S., in turn increasing the growth of the Arab population. The 1940’s were a period that increased the assimilation or Americanization of Arabs in the United States.

In 1965, the National Origin Act of 1924 was revoked. This opened the gateway for a diverse population of Arabs to enter the U.S.; it was this population that was the most representative (ethnic, national, religious) of the Arab world. Thus, during the second half of the twentieth century, there was a diversity of national identities that were migrating to the United States from the Middle East (Cainkar 2006). It was during the 1960 that Arab Americans emerged as a group. They began seeking civil rights through social activism to target discrimination that Arabs have been facing institutionally, domestically, and nationally (Naff 1999). Arab American Muslim discrimination, and Islamophobia in the United States has been the most recent event to unite Arab American Muslims in particular.
Post-1979, third world leftism was replaced with Islamism as a political model in the Arab world, which divided Arabs based on religion. This change unified Muslim Arabs, but did not include their Christian counterparts. As Deng (1995) states, “historical assimilation provides the bases for an argument that anyone can become an Arab simply by adopting Arab culture, speaking Arabic, and, preferably, converting to Islam” (405). With Islam as the majority religion in the region, for instance, Arab and Islam have become synonymous, although Arab defines a pan-ethnic group and Islam defines a religious one.

The value an individual places on an identity, whether based on e.g. ancestral, religious, or linguistic distinctions, plays a significant role in their identity formation process. Respondents in this sample conflate their Arab and Muslim identities, and often use them interchangeably. As Arab American Muslims, they share a collective identity as children of immigrants, growing up American, in a time where Islamophobia directly affects their ethno-religious identities. According to Melucci (1995), collective identities include a group of people who interact with one another, and share opportunities or constraints. Group members negotiate the group’s goals and actions, and they are also emotionally invested. Although Melucci applies collective identities to social movements, they are applicable in the analysis of understanding pan-ethnic, national, ethnic, or racial identities.

The Arab League, an organization of independent member-states, defines Arab on a cultural, or an ethno-racial basis. This includes twenty-two Arab countries that are geographically located in the Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros,
Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lybia, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

The term Arab encompasses a heterogeneous ethnic group, who share Arabic as a language, or have cultural similarities. However, persons who claim ancestry from an Arab country may or may not self-identify as Arab. A person's definition may vary in terms of linguistic variations, perspective of cultural similarities, or based on belonging to a religious group.

The overwhelming majority of participants in this study share the collective identity as second generation Palestinians. They were born and raised in the US, with a handful emigrating to the U.S. from Palestine before the age of five. The academic community defines this group as second generation, however participants often convey their journey living in the U.S. as a first-experience, and so they refer to themselves as first-generation Americans. In fact, when I would clarify the use of the term first and second generation as defined academically, they were perplexed and attempted to offer their own clarification by explaining that they were the first generation born in the US. In large part, this position is quite indicative of their experiences and collective identity as Arab Americans. Navigating a society that is not native to their parents, and in turn a society that perceives them as foreign regardless citizenship or naturalization, results in a fairly reasonable choice to assume the semantics of ‘first’-generation as that of a ‘first’-experience.

**The Palestinian Diaspora**

The statelessness of Palestinians sets them apart from Arabs in other countries. Encounters with British colonialism and Jewish immigration have settled the self-identity for Palestinians during the mid-twentieth century (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003).
However, Palestinian Diasporic identity formation is shaped by two historical “collective traumas and major obstacles” (Khalidi 1997), referred to as Al Nakba and Al Naksa. Palestinians experiences of exile began in 1948, during Al Nakba (the expulsion, mentioned earlier). This inter-state conflict resulted with 700,000 Palestinians expelled or having to flee their homeland, becoming refugees. In 1967, the Six-Day war, Al Naksa (the setback) between Israel and its surrounding Arab counties, Egypt, Jordan and Syria, intensified the population of Palestinian refugees (adding 280,000-350,000 more).

In 2001, the Palestinian refugee population was enumerated 3.9 million (UNRWA 2001). Al Nakba and Al Naksa have formed the majority of the Palestinian displacement from their homeland (Cohen 1999). Since then, patterns of emigration have continued since due to lack of opportunity and freedom (educational, economic, religious) well into the late twentieth century (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003). The Palestinian diaspora live in exile (Cohen 1999), and their political right to return to their homeland remains in question. Today, the Palestinian diaspora have made several countries their home, with the largest of the diaspora living in Jordan (2.6 million of the 6 million) (UNWRA 2005), and the largest Palestinian population outside of the Middle East in Chile. Many also live in Europe, the United States, and Latin America (Schulz and Hammer 2003).

**The Building of a Community**

The Chicagoland area is ranked as highly segregated, with a number of ethnic enclaves throughout the city (Logan and Stults 2011). One of these areas, Bridgeview, is located in Chicago’s southwest suburbs, and is home to a large Arab population who are predominately Palestinian Muslims. Similar to other ethnic enclaves, religion facilitated in forming this community to sustain both cultural and religious ties for
families. In fact, part of the motivation to build the mosque on Chicago’s southwest side was to instill Islamic values in youth. Arab Muslim immigrants feared that youth would stray from the religious practice and life as they assimilated into the host society (Mosque Foundation 2008). The story of the mosque is recalled in the Chicago Tribune (2004) as “a plea charity [in Chicago] asked for money [from Saudi Arabian social networks] 'before it becomes too late and we may lose our children because they are living in an unIslamic society.'”

The Mosque Foundation was built in 1981. Since then, it has served families with a prayer center, food pantries, weekend schools, educational programs, and a community center where meetings and special events are held. Bridgeview presents a space for Palestinian (and other Arab) residents to be a part of an ethno-religious community.

This southwest suburb of Bridgeview, IL is home to the largest Palestinian immigrant population in the U.S., typically from Beitunia, a town in the West Bank, occupied Palestine (Cainkar 2013). According to Cainkar, the village of Beitunia is historically reported as “the largest [immigrant] feeder village to Chicago” (WBEZ91.5 Interview, 2/7/13). In addition to the dense Arab population in the Bridgeview area, residents have access to a large Arab ethnic market. Cainkar notes, “I counted 100 Arab-owned businesses in less than one square mile between 79th and 87th and Harlem, and that’s just a little piece of their commercial enterprises down there [in Bridgeview]… that is definitely their hub” (WBEZ91.5 Interview continued, 2/7/13).

Most recently, The Chicago Reporter (2015), a non-profit news organization, details the visibility of the Arab population in the greater Bridgeview area:

Once you hit the pavement south of 80th Street in south suburban Bridgeview, Middle Eastern bakeries, grocery stores and specialty fashion
shops – along with business signs in Arabic – become commonplace. Near 87th Street and Harlem Avenue are the popular Al Bawadi Grill and a strip mall with Arab American-owned businesses ranging from a nut shop to a hookah lounge. But the community is more than businesses. Arab American families moving from both the city and Middle East have put down roots in Bridgeview and neighboring suburbs, establishing community centers and churches and making it one of the largest Arab American and Palestinian communities in the United States.

Since data on Arab Americans is not enumerated accurately, and they are accounted as white by the U.S. Census Bureau (Chapter 2), it is challenging to trace the population's presence nationally and locally. Sociologist, Louise Cainkar recalls, “I looked at the Census tracts block by block…” reporting the data “did not signify the communities in the Chicagoland area, although they do exist.” Bridgeview is one of those areas that remain under that radar. Respondents typically refer to themselves as living in Bridgeview, even if they live directly adjacent to it; in this study, I refer to these respondents as a part of the Bridgeview area or community.

Location is important for two main reasons: The space in which group members' dwell is a vehicle that supports or hinders the identity process. And second, the emergence of ethnic identity can wax and wane in the presence of another racial or ethnic group. Although Chicago's neighborhood diversity is growing, it remains one of the most racially and ethnically segregated cities in the U.S. (Frey 2015). This provides for an interesting opportunity to study group dynamics and identity formation.

A number of conditions are found to impact one's ethnic and racial identity development, such as one's socio-historical cohort (Frable 1997), immigration patterns (Jimenez 2010), the attitudes and responses of receiving countries (Phinney et. al 2001), institutional affiliation (French et al. 2006), and/or familial relations (Poston 1990). Ethnic identity is found to impact individual and group outcomes. It can influence
the academic and professional perceptions of achievement and goal attainment (Smith et. al 1999) of an individual. And finally, it can determine the economic and social status and position of persons on a collective level (Khazzoom 2008).

Scholars interested in studying Middle Eastern ancestry are growing, with themes ranging from assimilation patterns of Arab Americans in the US (Ajrouch and Jamal 2007; Ajrouch 1999, 2000, 2007; Naber 2000; Eid 2007; Samhan and Suleiman 1999), economic outcomes (Casey and Dustmann 2010; Read 2004), generational variations (Maliepaard et al. 2010; Ajrouch 1999), post 9/11 discrimination (Cainkar 2005; Shryock and Howell 2003), and civil engagement (Jamal 2005) to name a few.

Literature on Arab Americans has largely been unable to define ethno-racial intergroup relations, and dynamics within the community itself. The ethnic identity construction and process has not been assessed to identify competing social structures that shape one’s ethnic consciousness and identity development. Far too little work captures the ethnic identity development and construction of the children of Arab immigrants in the U.S., especially for millennials.

In this study, I focus on the divergent patterns of Arab Americans millennials, in terms of their state-given racial identification, intra-group social and cultural relations, and inter-generational patterns between the first and second generations. In doing so, I bring attention to the importance of space in the analysis of the second-generation assimilation by comparing and contrasting the experiences of persons who live in and outside of an Arab ethnic enclave in the Chicagoland area.
A couple studies, in particular, have helped pave the way for this research. Tomas Jimenez’s work on Mexican-Americans in his book *Replenished Ethnicity* (2010) has inspired the questions of focus in this study. Jimenez considers the social impact of ongoing Mexican immigration on Mexican-American (beyond the first generation) assimilation. He highlights how the duration of Mexican immigration has produced access to ethnic symbols and practices for Mexican descendants who are born and raised in the U.S.; it offers an opportunity for them to familiarize themselves “ethnic raw material” that “replenishes” the ethnicity of Mexican-Americans. Similarly, Felix Padilla (1985) who focuses on Latinos proposes that one’s situational identity should be taken into consideration when assessing ethnic identity development. As Padilla suggests, situational identity includes the environment an individual was raised, their familial influences and generational status, and finally, the self-perception of their status. Padilla demonstrates that the area in which one resides should be taken into consideration when considering waves of immigration.

**Methods**

This study design involves an exploratory research approach that calls for in-depth interviews. To tackle and develop an analysis on the racial and ethnic identity of Arabs, I focus specifically on the millennial generation. With over fifty-percent of the Arab population under the age of 30, and born in the U.S., millennials (those between the ages of 18-33, born in the early 1980s – early 2000s) are a good fit for this assessment. The criteria for recruitment were as follows: Participants had to reside in the Chicagoland area, identify as Arab, and as children of Arab immigrants (referred to as the second generation). In this study, second generation is described as individuals who
were born in the United States to immigrant parents, or immigrated to the U.S. during their early childhood (under the age of 5) (Oropeza and Landale 1997).

All data for this study was collected during May and June of 2014. Interviews took place face-to-face or via telephone, with all participants interviewed individually. Although traditionally face-to-face interviews have been popular for in-depth interviews, there are researchers who argue that using modern technology can be just as effective in the data collection process (Deakin and Wakefield 2013). The method can be used to complement or substitute the more traditional face-to-face interviews. Participants were debriefed before the interview. Pseudo-names are assigned for each respondent in order to maintain their anonymity. If the respondent had an ethnic/Arabic name, that criterion was mimicked for the pseudo-name (an important factor in the analysis). The average interview length was about two hours.

A standardized in-depth questionnaire was created to gather the necessary data. Questions were set up thematically, with both open ended and closed ended questions integrated into the form. As the interviewer, I asked all questions and provide answer choices/probe questions when necessary. I also use sensitizing concepts (Blumer 1954) to help guide my theoretical framework and analysis. The instrument underwent pilot testing on four students with Arab ancestry at UF before its use in the field. This provided me, the researcher, with time to make minor adjustments to the questionnaire accordingly.

Since Arabs in the Chicagoland area are scattered throughout the city and surrounding suburbs I used various strategies to recruit participants. Potential participants were informed about the study through snowball sampling, and by posting
flyers in local stores throughout the community (e.g. grocery stores, hookah lounges, restaurants) as well as sharing the details with religious institution administrators at churches and mosques (Muslim community Center on Elston Avenue and another on Belmont Avenue) that have a high Arab population. Additionally, I created a Facebook page¹ specifically for this study to promote participation and keep in touch with participants for snowball sampling purposes.

The overwhelming majority of participants were recruited from two events. The first took place in the Bridgeview area on Chicago’s southwest suburb. This event is an annual gathering to commemorate Al Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe that took place in 1948. Many families (particularly more women, and children/youth), various non-profit organizations, religious leaders (Christian and Muslim), and activists were in attendance. The Nakba Commemoration and Palestine Heritage event was sponsored by the American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) (American Friends Service Committee 2014), which took place next to The Mosque Foundation in Bridgeview. The second event was a bonfire, organized by Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) that took place on Chicago’s south side, which connected a number of college youth. The SJP event was put together to gain support and awareness of a local Palestinian activist, Rasmea Odeh, a woman on trial for immigration fraud from Palestine to the United States.

Respondents’ whom were recruited from the Nakba event generally stated that they found out about the affair through the Mosque Foundation, which lies adjacent to the space where the event took place. Participants were informed of the SJP event by

¹ www.facebook.com/ArabAmericanStudyChicago
means of the organization itself as members through their university affiliations (DePaul, Loyola, or U of Chicago), or they had a friend who invited them to join for the evening. In both cases, institutional affiliation (religious and non-religious) served as places where involvement in these ethno-political activities was made possible.

It is noteworthy to state that both events were political, involving the case of Palestine, specifically. Although Palestinian political awareness varies amongst group members, their attendance at these events indicates some degree of interest in this space. Both events provided community members a place to gather and mingle, share food, and/or hookah, as well as to recognize a history or need for political action. As the interviews reveal, some members of the community are more politically involved than others; however, having a Palestinian identity appears to be linked to a degree of political awareness regardless of political activity.

Although there were forty-eight total participants, after delving into the interviews I discovered that some participants did not meet the criteria to be included in the study (being born in the U.S. did not mean they were “raised” in the U.S., or they lived outside the Chicagoland area e.g. Wisconsin). This resulted with thirty-seven total participants; with about half living on the north or northwest side of Chicago, and the other half in Chicago’s southwest suburb in the Bridgeview area, also known as “Little Palestine.”

All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for analysis using Nvivo software. Structural coding was used to merge the semi-structured interview data into themes. A list of major categories was identified, and themes were then added to those categories – observed both at manifest and latent levels. Manifest levels indicates that the themes are “directly observable in the information” provided by participants
feedback, whereas latent levels are “underlying the phenomenon” and may be stated more indirectly (Miles et al. 2013: 267). Additionally, versus coding was applied to verbiage among participants to capture regional differences to analyze and compare the identity formation in high versus low concentration Arab communities.

**Demographics of Participants**

In sum, this is a fairly homogenous group of participants. Thirty-two are of Palestinian descent, and are children of immigrants who emigrated from the West Bank to the United States. Nonetheless, some respondents deviate from this criteria, but in this study, they are a minority.

Broadly speaking, the sample population in this study is middle class. They report an average total household income of $81,000 (median household income of about $75k), and many were homeowners (63%). The total household income ranged from 27% with an income that is less than $49,999, 22% at 50-74,999, 27% at 75-99,999, and 24% reporting an income over 100k. This differed by region, with the average household income of $67,000 in Bridgeview and $83,500 for non-Bridgeview respondents.

Respondent’s perception of their wealth varied, relative to the average American. Most reported their family wealth “at the average” (42%), followed by “above average but not wealthy” (33%), and “not poor but below average” (17%). However, this differed by region, with residents who lived outside of Bridgeview reporting their wealth as average (46%) or above the average (46%). Bridgeview had a bell shaped distribution with respondents reporting either “not poor but below the average” or above the average (26%) and most at the average (42%).

Father’s occupation in Bridgeview included wageworker (33%) (Truck driver, factory worker, chauffeur), professional (28%) (MRI tech, sleep tech, financial planner,
manager, engineer, software engineer, financial planner), and owner-entrepreneur (39%) (business owner e.g. grocery store, gas station, car dealership, real estate). In comparison, the occupations of father’s living outside of the Bridgeview area were solely professional (62%), or owner-entrepreneurs (38%). Similarly, the Bridgeview area had higher rates of mothers who were homemakers (61%) and less professional occupations (33%) in comparison to mothers living outside of Bridgeview who were reported with higher professional careers (53%), and less homemakers (47%).

In comparison to parents, children have higher levels of education – a measure that is indicative of upward social mobility. All respondents in this sample were either college enrolled, or they were working professionals who attained college degrees. Of the 37 respondents, 45% were in college, and 55% had professional degrees. Less than a quarter of mother’s had 4-year college degree (23%), however nearly half (46%) of respondent’s fathers had a 4-year college degree. All participants live at home with their parent(s) and sibling(s).

**Reflections of an insider – “She’s Arab? . . . But Her Name is Claudia!”**

My initial thought about conducting research that was focused on the Arab-American population was that I would be considered an insider to the community. The data collection experience in the field revealed that as partially true. Although I possess a number of ethnic markers that overlap with participants in this community, e.g., language commonality, familiarity of some cultural markers, and even some similarity in our physical features, other factors were not common and quite unfamiliar to me. I will introduce those factors, as I discuss my role as a researcher.

As a Chicago native and ‘north-sider’, it was a rare occasion for me to visit Chicago’s south side. Before conducting this research, I had visited the south side of the city as a
child, but I have no recollection of the community outside the home of my parent’s friends. I heard that there was a high Arab concentration on Chicago’s south side but had not experienced it myself. As far as the southwest suburb of Bridgeview, I had never heard of it or visited the area, so this was a new territory for me to explore.

Upon my arrival to Bridgeview, it was quite apparent that I was in a space populated by Arabs. Arabic signs on storefronts (e.g. jewelry stores, grocery shops, plazas, etc.), Middle Eastern restaurants, and hookah shops were visible as I drove closer to The Mosque Foundation, one of the largest mosques in the Chicagoland area, and one that is also highly populated with Arabs. The sound of Arabic music from fellow drivers, the presence of children and adults speaking Arabic in public, and more women wearing hijab in one isolated space than I had seen on the north side. The last time I felt this Arab presence was in my travel to the Middle East (Amman, Jordan as well as in Bethlehem and Jerusalem). Overall, I was amazed at the intensity of the Arab existence that surrounded me; this space was not far from where I spent nearly my entire life, yet I never made a trip to Chicago’s southwest suburb or had any connections to this community. With the Arab community so closely knit, it was rather odd that I was unfamiliar with anyone in this particular area.

As I was conducting the interviews, I was asked if I was Muslim or Christian. Since the majority of respondents were Muslim, my response as ‘Christian’ may have altered respondents’ feedback during the interview. As researcher, I did not feel the need to mask my identity to my respondents, seeing that they were engaging and trusting me with a dialogue of their personal lives. I also felt that my honesty and transparency would help built rapport during our interactions. However, I also realized that the
importance of religious affiliation connected respondents from the north and south side Arab communities. As an Arab Christian, it became apparent that this might have played a key role in the social network of Arab communities. Because this sample is predominately Palestinian-Muslim, I plan to explore the differences between Arab Christian and Muslim social networks, in more detail, as an extension of this study.

To hone in on one’s self-identification, participants were provided with identity cards (including American, my religion, Arab, country of origin, race, another category) and asked to choose three, and place them in the order in which they perceive as the most important of their identity. Table 1-1 presents a brief description of interviewees, as well as their identity card selections, which are discussed in various chapters.
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An Exploratory Study

The following questions are explored to assess the conditions that influence one’s ethnic and racial identity development: How have the 9/11 attacks shaped the Arab American millennials experience? How do respondents racially identify and react to their categorization as white by the state? What social conditions (e.g. religion, family, friends, work, leisure affiliation, spatial location) influence one’s formation of ethnic identity? What factors or conditions contribute to the ethnic boundary making of the second generation as Arabs and as Palestinians? How has growing up in an American context shaped the perspective and social integration patterns of Arab American millennials? How will these experiences affect the third generation? I capture information on social networks (family, friends), social capital (social, political, religious), and cultural values, to interpret the ethnic identity construction and its development among participants. Note that participants were asked a number of open-ended and demographics questions. Each of the subsequent chapters, following this introductory chapter (Chapter 1), includes a set of responses that pertain to a particular theme.

Additionally, at the end of the interview, I provided respondents with a set of cards that signified multiple social identities, including “American,” “my religion,” “Arab,” “country of origin,” “race,” and “another category,” where interviewees are able to chose an alternative identity to the existing card selection. I provided interviewees with a brief description of each card for clarification purposes, e.g. “country of origin refers to your parents country of birth, or your country of birth before immigration to the U.S.” Respondents were asked to place the cards in the order of importance pertaining to how they categorize their identity (Table 1-1).
Chapter 2: “The 9/11-Generation: An Arab American Millennials Experience” introduces Arab-American millennials, and presents how they have been impacted by the attacks of September 11, 2001. I refer to this population as the “9/11-Generation,” since their early age to adult years, known as formative years, have been shaped by a 9/11 era. This chapter explores how the events have influenced their ethnic, religious, and national identities.

Chapter 3: “White by Law: Involuntary Race Categories and Ethnic Identity” specifically focuses on questions relevant to evaluating their race selection itself, the process behind their decision, alongside how they identify if race were one of a number of social identities presented to them. Respondents were given a card that stated the following: “Using the following categories, what is your race? 1. White, 2. Black, African American, Negro, 3. American Indian or Alaska Native, 4. Asian, 5. Pacific Islander, and 6. Other – followed with a blank.” After making their selection, they were informed that the classification Middle Easterners were considered white by the U.S. Census Bureau, and they were asked if they considered this an advantage or disadvantage. Additionally, identity cards (Table 1-1) helped to engage participants in a dialogue about various parts of their identity and its importance to them – a discussion that begins in this chapter, but proceeds throughout the dissertation.

Chapter 4: “Ethnic Identity Development” considers how interviewees internalize their perception of self. For instance, how does an Arab living in the U.S. depict people who belong to his or her ancestry? Who belongs to this group and what characteristics are indicative of its membership? Additionally, participants are asked to describe what an Arab American experience means to him or her. Since group identity, and intergroup
attitudes, change with age (Ruble et al. 2004) and develop during young adulthood (Phinney et. al 1997), I focus particularly on the millennial generation to explore the conditions that contribute to having an Arab ethnic consciousness as described by members. Participants grapple with membership boundaries for themselves and have defined boundaries around what this means for Arab Americans.

The emphasis on Arabs as objects of analysis and not subjects of their own narrative, as demonstrated by the U.S. Census for example, takes away from the autonomy of group members. Thus, I analyze the boundaries set by group members, in terms of ‘belonging,’ alongside the negotiation process that facilitates ethnic consciousness. Through this dialogue, respondents share detailed narratives regarding inter- and intra-group characteristics and membership.

**Chapter 5:** In “Life in and Out of Little Palestine,” I compare the Bridgeview community to members living outside of Bridgeview. Socio-economic distinctions, based on residential locale, emerged through the interview process. Questions in this chapter focus on the ethnic identity consciousness of the second generation, and ‘growing up Arab in America.’ A number of social conditions, such as residential location, social class distinctions, and social networks (inter- and intra-group relationships), influence the crystallization process of one’s ethnic identity.

**Chapter 6:** Generational Variation. Two main themes emerge in this chapter. First, that there is an upward-vertical direction that should be highlighted in the parent-child relationship. Parents may come to grasp norms of their host society through direct contact with their child (ren), who navigate the host society, and may have access to connections that parents do not. Over time, this upward vertical relationship between
children and parents facilitates parents’ acceptance of host society norms. In fact, children who are older more often express that their parents are “strict” (that parents do not deviate from cultural traditions) and those who are younger are met with less strictness (likely to get away with behavior that they may not have had their older siblings not led the way). This chapter highlights that the relational connection of parent and child is powerful, and proves to be effective in the child influencing the ethnic boundaries of parents. The second focus of this chapter focuses on the parenting strategies, as they would be implemented by the second generation. In doing so, respondents describe parenting strategies through what they would retain or change for their children, by reflecting on their experiences. As discovered through the interview process, these comprise of addressing a communication gap through parenting styles that address their own ethno-religious frustrations.
CHAPTER 2
THE 9/11-GENERATION: AN ARAB AMERICAN MILLENNIAL EXPERIENCE

Q: Is there such thing as an Arab experience in America?
A: Definitely especially post-9/11…Like we went to sleep one morning as just regular Americans, woke up as this whole, entire, different kind of species…everything changed overnight, I remember I was in fifth grade….

- Lubna, Arab American, twenty-three years old

The Millennial Generation is a reference used to describe persons born during the early 1980s to the 2000s. During the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, millennials were anywhere from infants to adolescence. According to Karl Mannheim (1952), distinctive events can demarcate generational experiences. Mannheim refers to the adolescent and early adulthood years as a “critical period” where a cohort is active and reflecting on their experiences. In the following chapter, Arab American Millennials share what it is like growing up Arab in the United States. As respondents reveal, these experiences are heavily shaped by a post-9/11 period, during a time they were coming of age.

It is clear that Arab and Muslim identities have been stigmatized and distorted by the western world well before 9/11 (Said 1979; Shaheen 1984; Cainkar 2009). However, Arab American Millennials have come to internalize their ethnic, religious and national selves specifically in association with 9/11. More exclusively, the formative years of their ethnic identity development (from childhood to early adult) are shaped by or “rediscovered” in the 9/11 era. The social experiences of Arab American millennials are frequently made in relation to the 9/11 attacks, which play a pivotal role in the construction of their identity. Thus, the social stigma, discrimination, and ill treatment
against Arab Americans following the 9/11 attacks, alongside the internalization of these interactions, motivate the “9/11-Generation” reference.

Psychologist William Cross (1971) offers a theory on racial identity development that is helpful with understanding the ethnic identity development Arab American millennials. Cross uses five stages in his model, to describe the psychology of nigrescence, or becoming black. These stages include, pre-encounter, and encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. The stages do not have an order, and may be repeated. The stages are invaluable in grasping the development of ethnic identity of the Arab American millennials. I will define these as they apply to the Arab American experience, beginning with their encounter stage (pre-encounter simply signifies a point in time prior to ethnic introduction; a stage that was not explored in this study).

Environmental cues, beginning in middle and high school produce a need for one to self-inspect their racial and ethnic identities (Tatum 1997; Phinney and Tarver 1988). Tatum states that these social cues can be institutionalized. The experiences of Arab Americans illustrate how ethno-religious identities develop in academic (and non-academic) environments, post 9/11. Therefore, the backlash against Muslims and Arabs after 9/11 “signifies the presence of other social processes that facilitate conflating both groups and seeing them as monolithic” (Cainkar 2005: 1).

**The Internalization of the Self**

The dilemma of racism in America presents individuals with social, cultural and psychological strains. The effect of ethnicity is just as much an important contributor to adolescent identity development as are social class or gender (Steinberg 1996). Social stigma also referred to as negative social labels, or stereotypes, change not only
behavior towards a person by others, but also the self-identity of the individual in question. Accordingly, individuals subconsciously internalize how others view or label them, and an individual reaction to these labels shapes their self-identity (Conley 2009). Beginning at an early age, children internalize negative racial stereotypes and apply them in forming their self-perceptions (Clark & Clark 1939; Davis 2005). The Clark & Clark (1939) doll test, where black children from 6-9 years old were asked to select either a black or white doll to assess stereotypes, is a relevant example. Decades later the study was replicated (Davis 2005) resulting the same with outcome: Black children internalized their racial identity as inferior to that of whites. This internalized racism results with negative self-perception that persists over time.

Adults are not exempt of negative racial internalization. In The Souls of Black Folk, DuBois demonstrates the self-consciousness and experience in the daily lives of black Americans. As he explains, the struggles of the black man are hard to escape. Individuals begin to realize the racist tensions present, from the relationship of the body, the person, has within society. The internalization of his social surrounding messages tells him, the black man, that there are apparent criticisms that serve as an echo of an oppressive history. Negative stereotypes, discrimination and racism contribute to the ways in which one negotiates their identity. Thus, an individual's connection and relationships within their societal context help shape their ethnic identity through experience. Therefore, DuBois illustration of the discrimination and oppression of the black man may be applied to understand marginalized groups (e.g. minority groups, immigration policies, the war on drugs) in the United States.
Across generations, the perceptions of prejudice and discrimination are reported the highest among members of the second generation (Gil, Vega, and Dimas 1994). The racial prejudice and discrimination from peers causes members of the second generation to increasingly identify with their ethnic origin over time (Rumbaut 1997a). Children of immigrants can adopt negative stereotypes about themselves and project it onto their own ethnic-communities. However, group perceptions and attitudes do not go without consequence, even when stereotypes appear to be positive. For instance, the “Model Minority” status of Asian women has resulted with difficulty in their ability to concentrate that negatively effects test performance (Cheryan & Bodenhausen 2000).

Findings and Analysis

Lubna, who was introduced in the opening passage of this chapter, was 10 years old during the 9/11 attacks. Over ten years later, at twenty-three, Lubna’s immediate response to “an Arab experience” is in direct relation to 9/11. In the following passage, she elaborates on her experience as an Arab growing up in the U.S.:

My dad was scared for us to go out . . . he would personally be picking us up from school… Like they [U.S. society] had nobody else to blame so they started to blame all the people like around them that just fell under the category of Arab, whether you covered, whether you didn't cover, whether you a Muslim, whether you weren't even Muslim, you didn't even have to be Arab, you could be Pakistani, Indian, um Bosnian all that different, like everybody was to blame for what happened. So I definitely think there is an experience and there’s like, I didn't wear the hijab at that time, I was only in fifth grade, and then when I did wear the hijab, my dad took me to an Islamic school. – Lubna

Lubna’s father did not feel that she would be safe in a non-Muslim school, especially after 9/11. Since the hijab is a symbol of Islam, when she began to wear it, he felt she would be safer in an institution that supports Muslim identity. Lubna explains that her father was fearful for her safety because he heard of stories of abuse, attacks, and
harassment of Muslim women. In an attempt to protect his daughter from these public experiences, Lubna’s was transferred to an Islamic elementary school. Despite these efforts, Lubna states that she had an “Arab Muslim experience” at a Chicago public high school, where a group of Polish boys “ripped off” her hijab. She informed a security guard, who handcuffed the boys, and said, “this might be a joke to you, but in her religion, in her world, you just raped her.” Lubna agrees with this statement; in a metaphorical sense, she states:

He didn’t physically touch me or anything, but I felt like he stripped me from everything, you know. I was so vulnerable. I was so scared, I was like… you know you think you could be strong in that moment, but I was just like oh my God… you hear about this and you think ‘no, that would never happen to me’ and you know, it did and when he [the security guard] said that… I was just like oh my God, he’s right! – Lubna

The mosque community, family, and school administers collaborate directly and indirectly through Lubna’s, and they ask her what she wanted to do…

They’re like ‘you can sue him, you can take him to jail…’ I’m like I don’t want to do anything, I want a day where I can educate these teachers about what the hijab is, and I did. I got a whole day… I made these little pamphlets about the hijab, and I had a seminar… I bought so many hijab, I collected all the hijabs from my friends, I’m like ‘give me all the hijabs you got’ and I took them, and the teachers got to wear them for a whole day and it was the coolest thing ever.

The horizontal relationships that the Arab American millennials form, even amongst one another, as peers, friends, and neighbors, are shaped through a post-9/11 framework. As Tatum (1997) illustrates, racial and ethnic groups gravitate towards one another in diverse institutional settings, signifying the power of social or cultural similarities. Anton, for example, explains that in high school [Oak lawn community high school], there was a space for the group, “the camel corner… all the Arabs gathered there…” He speculates that members themselves may have generated the group name. “Camel corner” is not
something unique to his high school; it is a space that exists in other high school settings, and it is also a well-known reference to members outside the high school community. During Ramadan, a Muslim speaker at a community center mentioned how Arab youth should reject this label and the derogatory term “camel” “should not be taken lightly.” Nonetheless, similar to other race and ethnic groups, Arab American students find a space in which they are able to congregate in diverse institutional settings. As a result of their stigmatized identity, as Arabs and as Muslims, group members find comfort in gravitating towards one another. These group dynamics minimize interactions with non-group members, who question the ethnic and religious identities of Arab Americans. As a marginalized group, Arab American millennials are aware of the greater meaning to the question ‘where are you from?’

Is there such thing as an “Arab experience?”

Always being looked at as different is one thing. I mean I feel like everyone I know that is Arab has had that encounter, especially after 9/11. Having that ‘where are you from?’ talk and be like ‘uhmmmm, I’m not those people, but I’m Arab’ you know what I mean? Being seen as the general stereotype of what it is, and having people just assume that you come from a culture of, I guess, backwardness and terrorism, and aggressiveness, and being angry all the time…

- Jacob, Palestinian-Christian, 10-years old during 9/11

Arab American respondents recall their elementary school lunch as an experience where they are forced to consider their ethnic differences from dominant group members. Layal and Baseema’s introduction to their ethnic self is similar to many Arab youth, who have an ‘ethnic moment,’ realizing that their food, a symbolic extension of their culture, differs to that of their classmates.

I bought makloubah [Arab dish] to lunch in elementary school and they [white classmates] were looking at me, they’re like ‘ew, what is that!’ you
know…. So at that time, I just, I was kind of ashamed of my culture. – Layal

When you’re younger and you get like a pita bread sandwich in your lunch and you had to hide it, because you’re like ‘why didn’t I get peanut butter and jelly’ like everybody else.- Baseema

Likewise, Nada feels that having a name that does not fit in with the “norm” makes her ethnic identity stand out.

Being in roll call in elementary school, and having like the name like the teacher can’t pronounce. – Nada

Cross’s model illuminates the encounter experience for black youth is directly related to skin color. In the case of Arabs, ethnic markers may or may not be physical features making ethnic identity optional for some group members. However, the ethnic resources of Arabs deviate western material, which produce an encounter between two or more individuals that confirm difference between Arab youth and whites, for example. Layal’s lunch, as illustrated, does not only mark her ethnic difference from her classmates, it also defines social implications of her ethnic identity encounter with disapproval from her peers. As she grew older, Layal merged into an internalization stage, where she simply felt comfortable despite these messages:

Growing up I learned how to embrace my culture, when I was younger I didn’t… growing up with white people, they think what you do is weird.

Layal displays an internalization-commitment stage to her ethnic identity, where she desires to sustain ethno-cultural traditions. She defines her ethnic identity as something she has inherited, but she also realizes that it is a matter of choice to continue to the next generation.

Then, growing up, I was like no, you know, I'll embrace this. I don’t want my kids to lose their roots and blend in with the rest of everyone else. I find that to be so sad. So with me, it’s permanent. I hope for it to be permanent to my kids and their kids.
Layal’s commitment to her ethnic identity appears to surface from her realization that it is as visible and permanent as she makes it. This realization appears to further her commitment in maintaining ethnic and cultural standards beyond her generation.

The internalization stage is impacted by racism, discriminatory treatment, or acts of micro-aggression. Due to these negative experiences, individuals may become a ‘group representative,’ and/or adopt an oppositional identity. For instance, Lubna is a Palestinian Muslim nurse. Because she wears a hijab, and has experienced direct discriminatory treatment in high school, she wears a pin that reads “I cover my head, not my brain.” She feels that this is a message that can counter the stereotypical images of Arab Muslim women. Some patients question her ability to assist them, and some explicitly ask to be helped by someone else. She recalls a patient stating “you scare people… you scared the hell out of me… you know why” and she replied by “laughing it off” and stating that she was helping him and taking him to see the doctor (a family member apologized to her on the patient’s behalf). It is not uncommon for Lubna to answer questions about her hijab and religious beliefs, by colleagues and patients. She welcomes questions and feels that it provides her with an opportunity to explain Islam to people. Her hope is that her response will lessen the assumptions and stereotypes about Islam and the Muslim community.

In comparison to Lubna, Duha did not wear hijab during or after 9/11 for personal reasons. As a woman of Palestinian ancestry, she was temporarily opting out of the group ‘Palestinian,’ post 9/11 for her safety.

I would say I was from Jordan. It was a bit easier… I was kinda scared at that time. Everyone would look at me differently. That was the time where you would hear stories on the news where people [strangers] would be taking off their hijab [women in the Muslim community]… I would be pretty
much scared because I would hear so many stories like what happened at school or on the streets or something, so that made me say 'I'm from Jordan.' – 29 year old

Duha was 13-years old in 2001, however, 9/11 alongside the second intifada in Palestine (Palestinian uprising against Israel occupation) frightened her. She decided to refrain from referring to herself as Palestinian. Her reluctance in sharing her identity as Palestinian appears to relate to its conceptualization in the U.S. context. The televised footage of Palestinians celebrating the 9/11 tragedies, regardless of its condemnation by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, placed Palestinian identity in the spotlight. She felt that simply identifying as Palestinian would have greater social consequences and stigma than stating she was from a neighboring country that remained under the radar, in comparison. Duha reverted to identifying as Palestinian after high school. Refraining from revealing one’s national identity can be applied as a coping strategy to decrease group tension or rejection (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2009). As a result, during high tension in the U.S., Duha states she is Jordanian to decrease any political association and social tension that may be directed toward her through her as Palestinian.

These are some of the narratives from Arab American millennials that reveal how 9/11 has shaped their identity construction. The internalization of their ethnic and religious self is filtered through the perception of others. The impact that the 9/11 had on the American public omits Arab Americans from sharing the experience themselves as victims. Instead, the negative branding of their ethno-religious identities by the American community further marginalizes them.

As of recently, the public Arab experience was kind of dictated for us in a way. Like, with stereotypes and 2001 September 11 things like that. – Maysa
Second generation Arab Americans purposefully apply an oppositional identity, by representing ‘good Muslim’ and/or ‘good Arab’ to diminish any social stigma attached to their identities. This social stigma includes any perceived social characteristics that is met with disapproval or deviates from the norm (Goffman 1963). Respondents express feeling that audience member, the larger society, lack cultural awareness of Arabs and Muslims, which produce the group as a monolith and perpetuate stereotypes.

Sometimes when I’m around people that aren’t Arab or aren’t Muslim and I sometimes feel like I’m in a – I have something to prove, you know. And that’s a really exhausting feeling, all the time. . . Like, if I do something stupid there gonna think it’s stupid because I’m stupid, that’s fine. I have no problem with that. Don’t think it’s stupid because, and then they’ll be like ‘oh that’s because Arabs are stupid,’ ‘Muslims are stupid’ that’s a lot of pressure, but we always grew up like ‘oh whatever you do is gonna reflect on all like, the Muslims in the world’ you know, that’s like a really big responsibility… - Nada, 32 year old Palestinian Muslim woman

Respondents state that they consciously feel they serve as a group representative. In her book, Homeland Insecurity, Cainkar (2009) interviews Arab Muslims who reveal that the 9/11 attacks prompt “a thirst of greater knowledge about Islam… they needed to understand Islam better – not only for their own sakes but because they could not explain or defend Islam to others when their state of knowledge was inadequate.” This response continues to resonate with Arab American Millennials in this study.

As a definitive moment in history, the attacks of 9/11 have long-term consequences that effect the identity construction of Arab American millennials, in particular. Before 9/11, Arab Americans were discussed as an invisible, but marginalized group. However, 9/11 presents Arabs and Muslims as a negatively visible group and questions the member’s ethno-religious, and national belonging. Thus, Arab American millennials developed their sense of self as part of a highly visible, highly scrutinized group with its generational members facing a different paradigm than their predecessors. During
critical developmental stages of their upbringing, Arab American millennials are forced into revealing their ethnic and religious identities, which can be met with socio-political tension especially for Muslims, or they can attempt to conceal ethnic and religious markers as a coping strategy to avoid discrimination and questioning. To investigate the process through which Arab American millennials negotiate their identity construction in relation to governmental race classifications, I explore their selection decisions in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 3
WHITE BY LAW: INVOLUNTARY RACE CATEGORIES AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

When I was growing up, and I’d fill out those damn surveys I would have, I think I came to the realization when I was younger, and the teacher told me ‘put in white – you’re not black and you’re not Latino, you’re not filling out Asian, so put in white’ and I don’t identify as a white person.

-Rubaa, twenty-eight year old woman of Palestinian ancestry

Race, ethnicity and national identity have a relational connection with public policy and discourse. Although the terms are contested, they have a great deal of meaning and history, (Jenkins 2010: 18) and they are “real in their consequences” (Khazzoom 2008). In the United States, there is a great deal of attention that is attributed to meanings constructed by racial and ethnic composition (Alba and Nee 2003). However, the categories can be problematic since they are fluid, and not fixed or mutually exclusive (Castles 2002).

The ethnic categorization processes referred to by Jenkins (1994) explain that dominant group members – those holding power and authority - enforce identities over marginalized groups. These imposed social identities, such as racial classification, create distinctions that alienate groups from those perceived as dominant (Khazzoom 2008). A comparable account of Omi and Winant’s (1994) “racial formation” in the United States is referred to as “ethnic formation” in Israel (Khazzoom 2008). In either case, a label is imposed onto a group, where the group then creates boundaries or “ethnic boundaries,” that constitute changes over time (Wimmer 2008). For instance, Waters (1999) finds that ethnic self-identification changes by generation, where the first generation identifies by country of origin and the second generation identifies by the categories imposed onto them.
The U.S. Census, and government administration (federal, state, private-sector) are an example where racial, ethnic, and national categorizations are present. Jenkins (1997) refers to these as “administrative allocations,” part of a continuum where ethnic categorizations have informal and formal contexts (63). Pertaining to the case of Arabs, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the United States Census Bureau have characterized the group as white, along with descendants from Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Historically, belonging to the white race was desirable due to the political, economic, and social climate of the United States. However, the racial construction of white includes a phenotypical component that Arab group members may or may not possess. As such, ethnic identity is situational with important material and cultural factors that help understand its context (Fenton 2010), as demonstrated in the case of Arabs in this study. A person’s identity in the modern world appears in various contexts that overlap. These include personal, social and political, to name a few (Jenkins 1997; Smith 1996). Identity then, involves a macro (e.g. political/collective) and micro (individual) level of understanding, which affect self-determination.

Ajrouch and Jamal (2007) and Shryock and Lin (2009) argue that Arabs may racially identify as white, yet their perception of self is not in harmony with their state-given classification. Intragroup variation pertaining to racial self-reporting amongst Arab members include Lebanese/Syrian and Christian Arabs as more inclined to classify themselves as white in comparison to Yemenis and Iraqis and Muslims (Ajrouch and Jamal, 2007). However, the process and internalization of these racial selection choices warrants further research.
While racial selection outcomes offer an awareness of participants’ state given category of choice, the white versus other racial evaluation is limited in itself; it does not explore why respondents selected one label over another, how they come to select a particular response category, and what individual perceptions of e.g. racial classification influence this decision. In this chapter, I unpack the complexity of social identities – racial, ethnic and national, and ways in which Arab Americans in the Chicagoland area interpret them. This study provides an opportunity to evaluate racial response patterns and processes of Arab American millennials. Considering the Census administration is testing a race/ethnicity category to account for Middle Eastern North Africans (MENA) for the 2020 data collection, the information reported here may also serve as supplemental information to stakeholders, which in turn can improve national reporting strategies.

Immigration and Racial Classifications

Upon the formation of the United States, gatekeepers established racial categories to maintain immigration quotas. White domination, power and control, imposed a racial classification system that placed immigration restrictions based on region, genetics and/or cultural segments; a social construction rooted in dividing and conquering. Regional discrepancies were eventually exacerbated after the establishment of a modern centralized state – forming, the “United States” (Marx 1999).

The building of the nation-state was racially stratified and solidified through a system that was maintained by settlers. This was “an attempt to define the qualities and boundaries of white identity… without problematizing the normalization of whiteness and its equation with civilization” (Marx 1999: 327). Whiteness was eventually viewed as the norm. Upward mobility and assimilation, as in the case of European Jews and/or
Euro-ethics, into the American middle-class have enabled groups to transition into the white race (Sacks 1994; Ignatiev 1995). Exclusion from whiteness created social discrimination that was institutionally supported by the federal government (Sacks 1994: 66-67).

The case of Arab immigration to the U.S. is one of many ethnic immigrant groups that preceded and shadowed in the voyage for life in the United States. The first groups of Arabs to immigrate to the United States were Christians from Syria (geographically Greater Syria in the 1880s; includes Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, Jordan and Iraq) (Suleiman 1987). Legal construction and privilege of the white race lured them to contest (the legal contestation of immigrant identities emerged with the classification for naturalization stature in 1875) for whiteness (Roediger 1991: 13). Based on ethnology literature, Syrians were classified as Caucasian. Syrians contested for white identity using five points: White as Caucasian (ethnology), belonging to the Semitic nation (culture), Semites were considered white (legal), using European Jews as case examples toward a Semitic identity and naturalization (group identity), and finally, religious ties to Christians and Jews (religion). Activism in the racial prerequisite cases of other immigrants is believed to have earned them their whiteness (Gualtieri 2001: 40). Although efforts by Syrians to gain white identity appeared to be based on the issue of naturalization, the possible rejection into the white race indicated more than a label and/or citizenship rights, it meant that they would have been grouped alongside blacks that were ranked as inferior on a racial hierarchy (Gualtieri 2001: 47).

Racial and Ethnic Identity Formation

The area of racial and ethnic formation are classic to the discipline of sociology, and they contribute to the understanding of group cohesiveness and migration patterns.
Identity formation is a lifelong process (Dekovic & Buist 2005) that is challenging to ethnic minorities (Markstrom-Adams and Spancer 1994). Where identity can be defined as sharing a connection to others and being able to express that relationship (Erikson, 1994, 1974, 1980; LaFramboise et al. 1993; Phinney, 1990; Zhou & Bankton, 1994), ethnic identity is a way of “thinking, feeling and acting,” which influences one’s consciousness and behavior, and it is formed and maintained by social forces (Steinberg 1981: Preface).

Whether discussing one’s identity or ethnic identity in particular, the formation remains a complex process that involves negotiation and contestation. As such, ethnic groups do not possess a monolithic ethnic category, despite the racial and ethnic classifications that are confronted upon their arrival to the United States (Padilla 1995). The social construction of race in the United States, forces a number of immigrants to reconstruct their identities and begin to think of themselves in ethnic terms (Portes and Rumbaut 1990). Ethnic characteristics, such as immigration status, national origin, religion, and pan-ethnic identity responses, influence racial classifications (Ajrouch 2007).

Racial and ethnic group decisions are largely swayed by national policies that are time-dependent and challenge or hinder groups from social and/or structural integration. Today, people from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), who initially argued for white racial identification in the late nineteenth century for naturalization purposes, are requesting the Office of Budget and Management (OBM) and the U.S. Census to reflect their ancestry as distinct from that of Europeans; to tease them out of the white racial category altogether and create a “MENA” racial/ethnic classification (U.S. Census
Bureau 2015). Exploring the motivation behind this possible racial classification change from a local perspective follows.

**Whiteness**

The growing scholarship on whiteness has changed over time, much of it reflecting the socio-historical and present racial climate. The construction of whiteness is based on the ideologies of norms and a racial hierarchy that have been carefully maintained, by large, through social institutions and structures e.g. government, policy makers. By manipulating differences based race or ethnic differences, capitalists (Bonachich 1979) or gatekeepers (Khazzoom 2008) have strategically maintained social and economic inequality. The legacy of these racial constructions and their consequences continues today, in a post-colonial era, with the discriminatory treatment of non-whites. The results of a white racial construct have produced white privilege, or white skin privilege, for individuals who are “white-passing.” These white advantages are “oblivious” to whites in the same way that male privilege is invisible to males (McIntosh 1989).

James Baldwin (1984) argues that whites in the U.S. are those who have exchanged their ethnic identity for a racial construction that has solidified over time. Having “paid the price of the ticket,” as Baldwin puts it, whites have distanced themselves from their ethnic identity creating a “nostalgic allegiance” or “symbolic” relationship with their ethnic ancestry (Gans 1979), much of it voluntary (Waters 1990). As a result, whites can play “the ethnic race card” (Steinberg 2001) where they attempt to set parameters on the race debate that suppresses legitimate victimization of minority cases. The color-blindness of ethnic whites is a product of their ability to gauge ethnicity as an “option” (Waters 1990), since they do not experience the structural disadvantages of groups who do not have that option (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Carr 1997; Waters 1990).
Studying the social integration patterns of the Arab population, in particular, reveals an interesting phenomenon. Arabs are categorized into a dominant white race in the U.S., while they are socially perceived as an “other” or “outsider.” Unlike many white ethnics whose identity becomes voluntary, Arabs may not have that option. Post 9/11 transition has amplified the image of Arabs from “other” to the “Muslim other” alongside stereotypes, such as “terrorist, untrustworthy, heathen, uncivilized” (Aoude 2006: 147). This stigmatization of Arabs and Muslims has resulted in a shift, positioning them as anti-American. Mason and Matella (2014) find that this stigmatization has also created a “significant and substantively large decrease” in Arab and Muslim probability to self-identity as white post 9/11. This tension calls for the racial and ethnic formation process of Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. to be unpacked.

**Findings and Analysis**

A number of social conditions weigh into an individual's racial classification selections that prove this to be an identity negotiation process rather than an automatic response to governmental instructions. Racial categories provided by the government are left to individual interpretations. Some respondents base their decisions on instructions provided by or through institution staff and administration (e.g. Census, education), or direction received through associations (e.g. friends, family). Others use the process of elimination to decide on a selected category. Meanwhile, all respondents in this study continue to question the meaning of the race category altogether.

Qualitative interviews reveal that children of Arab immigrants have different perspectives and experiences that lead them to accept or challenge their state-given racial category as white. This analysis is based on respondents’ negotiation process of the white race classification, as operationalized by the OMB and the U.S. Census.
Bureau, combined with an identity card method (Table 1-1) that was used to position one’s identity into an intersectional framework. The identity cards also provide respondents with an opportunity to categorize the importance of their identity (national, ethnic, religious, gender), and situate the salience of their racial identification.

**Race Selections: White versus Other**

Respondent racial selections are dichotomous, as respondents wavered between their state-given classification as “white” and the alternative racial selection of “other.” The majority of respondents selects the “other” racial category and specifies their ancestral identity (23/37 or 62%) (Middle Eastern, Palestinian, Arab, MENA, Arab-American), over their state-given white racial taxonomy (12/37 or 38%). The following is a discussion that highlights the social conditions that influence group members’ decision-making process. Respondent narratives illustrate that a number of conditions influence the paths and positions of racial identity selection.

**Attitudes on White Racial Category**

Do you think that Middle Easterners or Arabs being classified as white is an advantage or disadvantage to the group?

I don’t know. I guess it’s a little bit of both. It’s an advantage, but at the same time it’s a disadvantage. ‘Cuz regardless, you still get racially profiled wherever you go as a Middle Easterner. – Violet, Palestinian ancestry

Respondent’s attitudes toward their state-given classification as white are in flux; most decide it is a disadvantage (15/37 or 40%) to be classified as white, yet nearly the same amount of individuals have mixed feelings toward the label and describe it as both, an advantage and disadvantage (14/37 or 39%). Participant responses differ for a number of reasons, with individual perceptions of whiteness and one’s relation to the dominant group influencing these selections. Respondents ultimately negotiate their
decisions on perceptions of individual, and collective belonging (racial, ethnic, and national).

The U.S. Census racial taxonomy of Middle Easterners as white is met with frustration and puzzlement by Arab American millennials. Respondent attitudes toward the state-given white label as (dis) advantageous do not necessarily correspond with their racial selections. Meaning, participants may perceive white as an advantage, yet they do not necessarily select that state-given racial category themselves. Salwa, for instance, perceives white as advantageous, yet she selects “other” and specifies “Arab/Middle Eastern” as her racial classification:

I feel like it doesn’t fit. When people hear “white,” they think European. There’s a specific image to it and I don’t feel like many Middle-Easterners, themselves even, would consider themselves white. And then even when, based on me growing up, the people I’ve always been able to, I guess you could say, get along with, or people that I related to, were never white people. It was very very rare that I related to white people. – Salwa, Palestinian ancestry

Similarly, respondents who deem white as a disadvantage do not necessarily select the other racial category. When given the option by the state, they specify their ethnic origin. Samir is a case in point. He perceives white as a disadvantage; however, he selects white as his racial categorization when given the Census options. According to Samir, he is simply following directions:

because usually there is parenthesis then after is says ‘a person of descent or origins from like Europe, then there’s another thing in there, then the last one says, or Middle East.’ – Samir, Palestinian ancestry

Regardless of perceived advantages or disadvantages pertaining state-given racial classifications, most respondents select the “other” category and specify their ethnic heritage.
Physical and Religious Characteristics

Respondents’ qualitative contributions suggest that physical and religious markers may influence racial attitudes. One’s sense of belonging to the dominant racial group, white, as defined by the state, is coupled with perceptions of their own characteristics within the context of their social space. For instance, stereotypical features of an Arab (dark features), “we’re brown” or “we’re tan,” and women who wear hijab, contribute to social exclusion in an American context. Using the following logic, Jacob and Banan, both of Palestinian ancestry, illustrate how their ethno-religious characteristics are markers of exclusion.

although we technically are considered white… we obviously don’t have I guess the same white privilege, if you wanna call it that. And, as you can see my skin color, I’m not exactly the whitest looking person…Just by putting that [white] as a label, yes, but the fact that knowing that I don’t have, like I said, I wouldn’t have the same white privileges of everyone else…. There are some kind of benefits to labeling ourselves as ‘white’ but its not nearly as much of the quote ‘white privilege’ benefits that come with the society norms and stuff.” – Jacob, Christian, “other – Arab/Palestinian"

Because of my hijab… so they [people in general] automatically like ‘okay she’s from a different world’… let me go find out where she’s from. I feel like they want to know why we are it so they asked me ‘where you from?’ ‘what’s your religion?’ then they get into the hijab question, like ‘what you wear your hijab?’ ‘what is that on your head?’… Not because my look [“I have blue eyes”], because I wear the hijab. – Banan, Muslim, “White”

Individual perceptions of possessing white, ethnic, and religious identity markers influence attitudes toward racial classification, not necessarily their racial selection. Jacob and Banan share how their ethnic and religious identities do not offer them a sense of belonging to the dominant white race. However, Jacob selects “other” and Banan selects “white.”

Possessing physical features that resemble that of the dominant race group do not necessarily imply respondents identify with the white race. Nuha, who is of Palestinian
ancestry, states that the OMB white racial classification “doesn’t necessarily encompass our experiences.” However, as someone who identifies as “white-passing,” Nuha recognizes how white privilege can work to her advantage:

I guess I identify as a person of color, but at the same time, I recognize I do have white privilege. It's [race] like not important to me, I guess. Race does not really affect me, if that makes sense…. I’m white-passing. I benefit from white privilege. If you just saw me and we were having a conversation, you would never guess that I was not white…. I think if I was darker, race would matter more to me. – Nuha, Muslim, “White”

Some respondents believe they are ‘white-passing’ since they do not possess ethnic religious markers (e.g. lighter skin complexions, do not wear hijab, no accent as second generation); they believe that they benefit from white racial classification and white social privileges. Edward, who is of Syrian descent, shares his take on white privilege. Unlike Nuha, he does not racially identify as white; however, he suggests some perceived racial advantages in social settings.

I don’t look Arab I get Italian more than anything, and I don’t have an accent. I don’t feel like I get discriminated against at all. – Edward, Muslim, “Other”

Respondents filter their ethnic and religious markers as conditions that affect their racial attitudes. These divergent racial attitudes and selections suggest that perceptions of belonging influence race selections.

I’m not white because white is considered an American who doesn’t consider themselves anything else. – Budur

Arab Americans do not express themselves as white, due to ethno-cultural distinctions. Respondents often define white as a term that overlaps with Americanism. In doing so, respondents describe white as an identity that lacks ethnic markers, or a commitment to ethno-cultural traditions, at least to some degree. In the following sections, respondents focus on conditions that influence their racial decisions. Although ethnic options do not
appear possible for some Arab Americans respondents based on their physical and religious markers, racial options (white versus non-white) appear to hold some interest for group members.

Some respondents attempt to challenge their state-given racial category, white, by basing their explanations on minority intergroup comparisons (e.g. phenotype and social experiences) to support their argument. Afifeh, who is of Palestinian ancestry, is one example. She states, “Hispanics and Latinos have their own minority group… Middle Easterners should probably have their own minority group.”

Taking Hispanics into consideration is a relevant and interesting case. According to the U.S. Census (1999), “the Hispanic population is predominately white” and white Hispanics are defined as “the Hispanic portion of the white population, or as the white portion of the Hispanic population” which is a two fold question on ethno-racial identification that includes Latinos. Afifeh’s comparison of Middle Eastern to Hispanics and Latinos suggests that Middle Eastern could be inclusive of persons who, like Hispanic, share a “heritage, nationality, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before arriving to the United States” (U.S. Census 2013). This description is one that many respondents are in favor of. At any rate, if it is a case of racial classification by skin color, then white is a category that is not relatable to some members of the larger Arab ethnic community. Respondents make the claim for the racial reassignment of Arabs by using other race groups as cases for justification (ironically, as early Arab immigrants did when attempting to achieve white racial classification). These included African Americans, American Indians, Asians, and Latinos.
Asians are white also as in skin color, but then they have their own category, I feel like we should have our own too, you know. We should be classified as people instead of just, like, as our own ethnicity, instead of just you know, like, put in with another group [whites]. – Suha, female

Rawan, who is of Syrian-Egyptian ancestry, believes Arab ethnic identity is closely related to African American than white. She bases her comparison on skin color, which she feels is justified since Arabs tend to have “darker skin.” For Rawan, distinguishing her racial identity is even more challenging than other respondents because she is bi-ethnic. She explains:

I am none of those [racial categories]. My one country is on the continent of Africa and the other country is in Europe, so I don’t know what to pick! …not fair. We’re not white. You know? We’re tan, we’re not all white. Everyone’s skin tone is different, why should we be called white? Doesn’t make any sense.

In Rawan’s case, she disaggregates herself from identifying as racially white, primarily by relying on geographic locale and phenotype. When asked to select a racial category, Rawan selects “other” and does not specify her ancestry. Some respondents agree with Rawan, and state that the white racial taxonomy simply did not make sense – e.g. geographically, culturally.

We’re not in the slightest bit European, you know, we’re right between Africa and Asia, we’re Mediterranean. – Anton, male

Jamal, a 29 year-old Palestinian-American lawyer, echoes Rawan’s frustration.

[white] does not define anything. It’s a color. When you say Arab, now you’re referring to a particular geography, a particular type of history. You’re referring to a language. There’s a lot of components, there’s a lot of cultural traits inherent in that word that is sort of whitewashed – pardon the pun – or somewhat erased by using this [white] terminology. – Jamal

Baldwin’s (1983) posits white as a social construction that does not provide much meaning. These are precisely Jamal’s sentiments, as he articulates the deviation of Arabs as a collective group, from that of white. Jamal articulates Arabs as a group who
has a long-standing history in comparison than whites, or Americans who have
European ancestry. The “symbolic ethnicity,” of persons with European ancestry in the
U.S., borrowing symbols of one’s ethnic culture and not the culture itself (Alba 992),
situates white Americans as a group that is distinct from Arab Americans.

Although Jamal selects the “other” race category, and specifies Arab, he feels that
this alternative category does not distinguish his ethnic identity. Jamal expresses his
dismay of being the “other” as he articulates the western gaze of Arabs referring to
historian and scholar Edward Said (1979). Jamal declares, “no – don’t tell me that I’m
the other. Just give me a blank, let me define who I am.”

White Advantages: “There’s no flaw to them.”

I think it is an advantage… because how society sees white people, it’s
like they’re the majority and there’s nothing wrong with them, in society.
There’s no flaw to them. […] say I’m filling out for a job online, and they
don’t see my face, you know, cause if they see my face then they’ll know
I’m Middle Eastern. But, if they don’t see my face they’ll be like, oh she’s
white, you know. I prefer her over the black person. That’s just the way
society is, you know. – Layal, Muslim, Palestinian

A portion of (8/37 or 22%) respondents in this study feels that their racial
classification as white is an advantage. They consider identifying as white, at least on
paper, as a positive criterion that allows them to deter discrimination. Layal is one of
these eight respondents who selects white as a racial label, and she prefers this
selection. She feels white identification provides her with social and economic
opportunities that she may not be able to attain if she were to specify her ethnicity.

Layal does not stand alone in making this decision. Majda, a Palestinian Muslim
woman who works as an executive director in marketing, agrees. She states that “jobs,
college… when they profile it [applications]… it gives you a better advantage if you
choose white." Edward, who is self-employed, is also convinced that the economic market is racially biased against Arabs. He explains:

cause they’re [Arabs] frowned upon. I don’t feel being Arab is actually a good thing. Maybe you’re filling out an application for a job and you put down white. I think if you put down white you have a better advantage of getting the job

Farhah suggests decisions are institution-dependent. She states, “when I go apply for a real job I really don’t know what I would put […] Cause I know they do discriminate […]” Randa concurs. She states that a state-recognized white racial classification, as an option, can deter Arab stereotypes. She bases her conclusion on perceptions of whiteness, which are not synonymous with “terrorist or anything like that.”

Additionally, respondents perceive minority status as “looked down upon” (Hibah, twenty-five year old, Palestinian-American, accountant) or “in a bad way” (Afaf, twenty-two year old, Jordanian-American student), which they believe has a bearing on job opportunities. For these respondents, white racial classification is a way of deterring discrimination – at least on paper; it provides a sense of social and economic mobility for “real” employment opportunities. Respondents apply it to escape the social stigma of being labeled a minority; and it serves as a possibility to dispose of stereotypical Arab characteristics.

This “investment in whiteness” (Lipsitz 1998) and perceptions of white advantages in the twenty-first century echo strategies previously applied to persons of Irish ancestry (Ignatiev 1995). Respondents’ perceptions of race are partially embedded in a psychological component for them to identify with a dominant race group, white Americans, who do not have a stigmatized identity. White racial identity continues to uphold a level of power in perception that the option to identify as such continues to
entice some level of interest for respondents. Unlike descendants of European immigrants in the U.S., who have the option to identify with their ethnic heritage (Waters 1990), the physical or religious characteristics of Arabs and Muslims seldom allow them such privilege. However, the “ethnic option” of identifying as white or by one’s country of origin on paper, retains interest for group members.

**White Disadvantage: “I Am Not White!”**

from what I understood, the first Arab Americans that migrated to this country, they were from Syria. I think it was the 20s and the 30s and they really pushed for the Arab being considered white just because they wanted to be considered more mainstream… I think we could become mainstream and still maintain our own ethnicity… I never would feel comfortable, I would never tell somebody I’m white. Like, that’s not what I am, and it’s not that I’m against people being white or like, it’s I don’t think it’s a tension sort of thing. Um, which a lot of people want it to be, like some sort of conflict, ‘oh why don’t you wanna consider yourself white?’ and it’s not that I dislike white people or don’t want to be white, its just that’s not what I am. – Baseema

The racial and ethnic context has changed since the first wave of Arab immigration to the U.S. in the late twentieth century. As Baseema describes, Arabs, like many ethnic immigrants to the U.S. desired white racial classification. Decisions to petition for white racial classification from the U.S. government was strategic, “to secure an advantage in a competitive society” (Ignatiev 1995: 2). As respondents in this study illustrate, these perceptions have certainly changed over time.

Many respondents (15/37 or 40%) believe that the state-given classification of Middle Easterners under a white racial label places them at a disadvantage. They believe that white is not a proper specification of their ethno-racial identification, and conclude it as an inaccurate assignment by the state. An overwhelming majority of respondents (23/37 or 62%) choose (and specify) “other” given the racial choices as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Respondents generally solidify their ethnic identity through cultural
practices (Wimmer 2008). Genealogical perceptions of ethnic identity, and the idea of ethnicity as reproduced from one generation to another keep ethnic identity stable, and distinct from white Americans. These respondents also suggest that it would be more accurate if the group were racially reassigned. Respondents base their reasons on skin color/phenotype, and argue that neither they, nor through the gaze of the other (most frequently referenced as European ancestry whites who were often referred to as “white Americans”), do they classify as white.

Um, I think it’s kind of false because we’re not white, you can definitely, if you put a Middle Eastern person and a white person together, or next to each other, and you ask which one’s the white one if you had to pick one, it would definitely be the [white] American because we, some of us don’t look white, some of us definitely look Middle Eastern. – Malakah

By conflating the terms white and American, Malakah concludes that Middle Easterners are not white. She applies the term “American” to refer specifically to whites, which also places the national belonging of Arabs into question.

The sizable and increasing population, and Rula explains, is another reason that Middle Easterners should be enumerated separately by government officials:

Honestly, I think they should have their own category especially because in America the Middle Eastern population is so large. It’s like, you know how they have the Asian population. I feel like the Middle Eastern, especially here in Chicago, they’re a lot higher than other races so they should have their own category cause we’re growing. - Rula

Many respondents reveal frustration with their state-given racial criterion, and some find it “a hassle” which prompts their selection of white.

Less complicated, less confusing . . . a couple times I’ll choose ‘other,’ but then they’ll say, you know, ‘what do you mean by other?’ But plain and simple, I just put white…— Duha, female

Respondents desire a Middle Eastern category that is in harmony with their cultural and ancestral identity, by the state.
Every once in a while, when I’m sick of like, ‘Agh, they never put Middle Eastern,’ or whatever on there, I’m like, ‘fine, I’ll just circle ‘white’… ‘Cuz I was born and raised here, so after all, I am kinda white. So. It’s one or the other. I go between the two. – Violet

State-given racial criterion is selected as a way to avoid “a hassle.” Respondents come to see their ethnic identity as something that prompts further questioning, or clarification, in the United States. Simply for “convenience”, some respondents do not deviate from state-given racial standards.

**Socio-Cultural Distinctions**

This distancing of Arabs from identifying as white, their state-assigned racial category, is articulated through social, cultural, and ethnic standards. Respondents believe these sit in opposition to how white is defined, understood and treated in the U.S context. In fact, respondents often use white and American interchangeably, just as Muslim and Arab are often substituted, alongside expressing their sentiments of how Arabs are “not white.” These seemingly “natural” associations infuse race, nationality and religion with ethnic identity.

The internalization of these patterns and lived experiences attached to racial labels reinforces Arab cultural and religious distinctions. These challenge respondents’ state-given racial classification as white, and threaten their American national belonging.

We’re all human, but our experiences at home, our experiences with parenting, our experiences with our parents, are different then other American households. And at the same time, you know, it’s trying to blend in the West with the East, growing up, for me. And it’s also the mischaracterization. We’re always having to explain ourselves; we’re always having, you know, all this crap around us. Politics is in our lives twenty-four-seven, because every time you turn on the news something’s happening in Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, you know – all those things, so I think it’s just a hard combination of combining the values from back home and your family values, with the values here. - Rubaa
As Rubaa explains, it is not only a private experience that prompts her to deem her identity as opposition to that of a white-American; it is also her public experience in the U.S., and the connection of her identity to Arab politics overseas. Additionally, ethnic, cultural, and generational standards (deemed as learned or inherited), have individuals conclude that their cultural benchmarks are different than those of whites. For instance, Randa’s parents emigrated to the U.S. in the early 1980s from Palestine. She challenges white racial identification based on ethno-cultural inheritance, “because my parents are none of those above [in the options listed].” Cultural standards solidify these boundaries, as Maya, a twenty-five year old whose parents immigrated from Palestine around the same time, expresses “…who I am [Palestinian, Muslim], that’s how I was raised, brought up” makes her different than her white American counterparts.

Marco, who is Palestinian-American, states, “you’re not getting recognized for who you are!” This expression resonates with several group members. Rubaa believes that white does not represent Arab social experiences or individuality.

I don’t identify as a white person. I don’t feel that my people are treated to the same standards… I never was raised to believe that I was white… I think it’s very important that I put it on a piece of paper. God knows who sees it, but I want people to know that there’s an Arab person or a Middle Eastern person in the room, being represented still.

If it is a matter of skin-tone, Julie states “I think we are, color-wise, yes. We’re white.” However, she does not agree that Arabs are white because this racial categorization is not descriptive of the group distinctiveness. She states “its not really a true sense of what you are ethnically…. I think it’s very broad.” Randa agrees with Julie, expressing “the way we were raised is way different.”

Jamal, who was earlier noted as expressing his apprehension for the alternative option “other” on the Census forms, furthers his criticism of this racial option.
Well, I know what the census entails and the word white includes members of people of the Middle Eastern region. And I disagree with that for two reasons. One, culture is far different. Two, the reason why I pick other but still be against it, is because this implies something of a different species, almost. We're the “other.” So, we don't have a category. So, it’s as if we're not good enough for a particular, defined category. We’re a scattered people, we are either clumped within one of these groups or we’re something of an entirely different genre. So, but if I’m forced to choose between these six, I would pick other to signify that there is a difference.

The other category, as described by Jamal, is not only a misrepresentation of the Middle Eastern person by flattening their ethnic identity – it also dehumanizes their existence. Given the option, other, he takes it upon himself to specify his reality as Arab – “a scattered people” – who encompass assorted intra-group distinctions themselves.

**Missing Data on Group**

Respondent opposition to their state-given white label includes missing the opportunity to collect national data pertaining to the group. This negates the power and influence of Arabs in American politics. Baseema delves into this explanation by describing a number of reasons this is a disservice to Arabs.

I think it’s more of a disadvantage because then we don’t have any data on what, what’s the education rate amongst Arab Americans of what’s the poverty rate amongst Arab Americans in the US, because we don’t have categories… even for campaigns… if you wanna know, its so easy for me to look up in Chicago…like 30% of African Americans vote, okay, as opposed to like 80% white Americans, so you could see those statistics. Arab Americans we don’t even have that kind of data, we have to hire outside Census. Because I used to be like really into voting and stuff so you have to look, even if you have that data because it’s not, we’re not gonna be able to see who’s doing what. And I think, I don’t know, it’s a disadvantage I’ve had because you’re never gonna be identified as being a part of anything. Like, you can’t quantify how many Arab Americans go to college, or get financial aid, or need social services or something like that because we’re never even, we don’t have numbers, or no one knows our numbers.
The racial self-selection decision is a process, which can change over time. Nada was in her mid-twenties when she made a conscious choice to stop choosing white. Now at thirty-three years old, she explains the development and negotiation process she experienced.

it almost seemed like that was good that we’re considered white. I’m not sure why because that’s probably how we grew up with some kind of inferiority complex. But then, when I got older and I really understood what it meant that we didn’t have, like we didn’t actually have a category, um, and it actually meant that we weren’t even yet considered even a race in the United States. I started to think… why aren’t we, why aren’t we standing out… why aren’t people trying to get the Arab vote… So I started to think, well no, we need to start putting on these forms who we are so that people actually know that we’re here. And we’re a substantial group. Um, so that’s why I changed…… The people that matter, our policymakers or whoever, aren’t noticing us as a group, and if we’re noticed, I mean, we have a better chance of being heard and so that’s an advantage. But we don’t have that advantage and we also, but we’re still not treated, we’re not treated on the streets for example, like, you know, a white person, generally. So, we’re still discriminated against and have all the negative stuff, you know what I mean, so I feel like we’re getting it from both ends.

For Nada, this conscious decision was based on claiming an identity that she felt was otherwise marginalized. Her concern for Arab representation is linked to her interest in political decisions, and the visibility and voice of the group. Banan, who is nineteen years old, recognizes this fear as well. As a member of the group that described white as solely a disadvantage, she states, “we don’t have a voice – like the rest of Americans!”

Lacking Minority Group Status

Respondents feel that they are not benefiting from their minority group status because the state assumes they are racially white (e.g. affirmative action, non-profit grants). Since some respondents tend to compare their experiences to other minority groups in the U.S., as illustrated earlier – based on phenotype and social experiences,
they feel that they are placed at a disadvantage under the white racial category. Rubaa, a twenty-eight year old youth instructor at an Arab non-profit center, exemplifies this point though her first-hand experiences at work.

Working in non-for-profits… I mean, I've ran into some ignorant Arabs, who are like 'yeah, you know, this [white label] is awesome,' but… working for a non-for-profit, we have lost so many grants because we're under that category [white], but yet we don't receive the same benefits as white people. If that makes any sense, like for example, most Arabs I work with grew up the same as me, below poverty, and they're not getting any assistance because of that category. And I always hear that US Census category all the time and we've lost so many grants cause of that category for help in the Arab American community. There was actually a domestic violence grant that was lost to all the Arab non-for-profits because of that category.

The disappointment that Rubaa expresses here is based on her articulating a double-victimization of the Arab person. Due to the discriminatory treatment that Arabs experienced because their visible minority status (physical markers, skin color, cultural traits). In addition, Rubaa argues that Arab victimization is intensified through white racial classification because it denies them their marginalized social status, making them ineligible for minority social services or benefits.

there are minority benefits to being a minority as far as like school scholar, college scholarships, and you know, all these different kinds of things that we were never qualified for because we had to check white. And so we weren’t considered minorities and the thing that sucks about that is we have all the disadvantages of being a minority and none of the advantages..... – Nada, Palestinian ancestry

Julie and Anton agree with Rubaa. They deem the white racial classification as a disadvantage in terms of opportunity targeted for minorities.

 Depending on what you’re applying for, for schools, sometimes – like if you’re applying for college and you check off white, you may not be looked at because they have a higher percentage of white people because of affirmative action, and same with jobs. – Julie, Jordanian ancestry
I think it’s definitely a disadvantage because we lose out. In college, for college applications, I was very tempted to put other because of affirmative action and I definitely felt like if I just put white it would actually work against me in many cases. Also, it’s just you know, I don’t wanna say it’s a pride thing but it’s not what I am. That’s not working for me, you know.” – Anton, Palestinian ancestry

Julie and Anton believe that they are not entitled to minority benefits, like affirmative action, because of their state-given white racial category. The increasing tension against Arabs and Muslims in the U.S., especially after 9/11, appears to grasp the attention of respondents, since minority status can aid in preventing institutional discrimination based on race, color, religion, and/or national origin.

**False Sense of White Privilege**

Some respondents do not feel that they benefit from white privilege, as do whites with European ancestry. Twenty-five year old Baseema, who is of Palestinian descent, clarifies this point as she describes her public whereabouts. As a Muslim woman, Baseema wears a hijab, which contributes to the response of her racial misclassification.

socially I’m not white, in the airport I’m not white, like in most places I’m not like, people would consider me outside of that realm of being white, and I’m not entitled of most of the privileges of white people…

Although Afifah selected white, she opposes this racial label and believes it has group disadvantageous. As a television producer of Palestinian ancestry, she feels that being labeled white makes it difficult to express group oppression. Thus, white provides Arabs with a false sense of privilege.

I think that it's a disadvantage. I think that when we are lumped specifically into that category not only does it sort of take away a sense of ethnic identity it also puts us - puts the assumption that we are of privilege... It’s very very hard to make the case that you’re discriminated against or that you are you know, like not, that you are not the majority. – Afifah
Afifah’s words resonate with other group members. Baseema shares her sentiments:

it’s a disadvantage because again, it’s like dismissing who we are, and on one end like, again, we don’t get to share in any of the privileges of white, the mainstream white person, so we’re not even like respected or identified as like a people. It’s just like you know you guys kind of bother us but we’ll sweep you into a category of like, this lump, this lumping of like white people, and its not who we are. – Baseema

Perception of others and the internalization of having non-white social experiences – e.g. racist remarks, were reflective of the misclassification of the Middle Easterners as white:

I’ve never considered myself ‘white’ and I don’t think most white people consider me white. I mean, I’ve always strongly identified as being Arab or being from the Middle East and I think we need to like, I feel like everybody else has a category to define them, and the Arab American or the Middle Eastern experience is way different than the white experience. I don’t think they’re the same thing. – Baseema, female

we don’t get to benefit from being a minority, even though we are. And how are we white? People specifically call us out for not being white…. I don’t understand having this label ‘white’ it’s like, I was being called a sand nigger, you know. – Yasmin, female

although we technically are considered white… we obviously don’t have I guess the same white privilege, if you wanna call it that. And, as you can see my skin color, I’m not exactly the whitest looking person. So, even when applying and I went in to interview once, like the person was confused when they saw me cause they were just like maybe he’s just really tan. I got to know the person later after getting the job, and then they told me that. And I was just like, yeah, it’s just like a necessary choice I guess, like there wasn’t an ‘other’ option. – Jacob, male

Form-Dependent

Depending on the type of form or application, some respondents stated that they would opt for white on work, school, or government applications rather than other. In these cases, the power of the state-given categories is negotiated with discriminatory experiences. Thus, the widespread negative associations of Middle Eastern or Arab in the United States are deliberated, and participants respond accordingly. Yet, having the
option to identify as white, and its perceived potential of receiving white privilege weigh in on the racial decision selections. Actors negotiate boundaries, depending on how they filter a specific social field related to an institution or power dynamic (Wimmer 2008). This white privilege, according to Arab respondents, can be noted to appear ‘on paper.’

Well we do not benefit from white privilege, or we do to an extent, but obviously we’ve faced a lot of discrimination and hatred in this country so I don’t think that we qualify as white especially when we’re applying for jobs and we put our name down as Muhammad Abdallah for example. We’re not going to be treated the same as a white John Smith, so I don’t think ME’s do qualify as white. I don’t think its accurate.

Farhah states that researching the company would be a good idea. She believes that the employer, that being whomever it is reviewing applications, could potentially discriminate if someone checks other. She also states that she has known people who have been discriminated against because of their names, “it all depends where you’re applying and who the person that’s looking through the application is and how they are, you know, it just, it really all depends who’s looking at it and where you’re applying.”

Depending on the institution, respondents thought it would limit some opportunities e.g. educational funding, but it would be advantageous in other cases. Anton, for instance, bases his decision on the level of perceived discrimination from the corresponding institution. He states, “if it’s like really serious like college, I just put white . . . Other – for online surveys and such… Me personally, I always choose other…”

**The Power of the State in the Racial Selection Process**

I don’t consider myself ‘white’ at all, but if it’s in parenthesis that it does say that it’s ‘Middle Eastern’ then I feel like I’m obligated to pick number one [white]. – Baseema, female
Selecting racial identity was determined based on the options provided despite their limitations; often made to simply satisfy directions provided by the state. Respondents express that they have used Google to retrieve such information, however, if no direction is provided on a form they select the racial category “other.” The racial category other serves as an alternative method for respondents to self-identify if given the opportunity.

I used to put white, it’s only recently that I started doing the other, but if there was no other I’d put white. – Nada

When respondents are confused with the racial selection process, they ask someone for assistance, as in the case of Layal who states “…they told us to always put Caucasian or white [teachers]….” Often, students who are completing forms in educational institutions rely heavily on teachers and test administrators for directions, claiming the selection choice “what they taught us in school.” At times, instructors appear to follow the prompt provided by state or they use the process of elimination to assist students with making their racial selections.

the teacher told me ‘put in white – you’re not black and you’re not Latino, you’re not filling out Asian, so put in white’ and I don’t identify as a white person. – Rubaa

In a few cases respondents were led to select alternative choices e.g. Pacific Islander; in retrospect, does not make sense. Respondent confusion, in terms of the existing choices, remains. Based on applying the process of elimination, respondents select white not because they identify as such, rather their decisions are based on state-given directions, alongside relying on someone that is deemed knowledgeable or a person of authority.
For instance, some respondents rely on family and friends in making their decisions. Duha’s response is not an uncommon scenario: “my cousins told me before, so I guess we’re just [white].” Respondents express that the person helping them was someone who had become familiar with their racial classification from experience of going through the selection process themselves (through school or otherwise).

**Situating Racial Identity into a Broader Context**

Given various identity dimensions (ethnicity, religion, etc.), race is not particularly relevant for respondents. Of thirty-seven respondents in this study, only two select their racial identity as one top three choices and never as primary to the importance of their identity. In other words, when presented with multiple social identity options, including race, the overwhelming amount of respondents eliminate this specific category and select their religious identity (Muslim), followed by their country of origin (Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Egypt).

In cases where country of origin is the primary identity card selection, respondents express strong ties with “the Palestinian cause,” “the occupation,” and “the struggle.” With many respondents recruited at political events, the prominence of Palestine and the occupation do not come as a surprise.

I would say I picked country of origin first because it’s very important to me… I’m a person who just wants to strengthen my ties to Palestine and I honestly, one thing I’m considering doing is – if I’m ever able to is to actually go live there, so that’s one thing I feel like deserves to be a priority.

Most respondents identify “Arab,” (Cards 2 and 3) or by their country of origin (Palestine, Jordan, Syria). Stating “I was Arab before I was American,” some respondents base their decisions on child rearing and cultural practices, or Arab as a collective ethnic identification, which is culturally distinct from American identity.
Respondents construct stable boundaries around country of origin, and base their reasons on ancestral ties and genealogical characteristics as “natural” or “inherited”, which places this particular identity as more prominent than race. Arab also appears to be reciprocal with country of origin for some participants as it, “ties back to also being Palestinian.”

Palestinian is in Arab and that’s important because we need to be a unified Arab people so I think it's important to relate to other Arabs. – Amineh

As a collective identity, Arab is the most popular, following religion. However, respondents construct their country of origin as a part of an ethno-religious identity. The merging of ethnic and religious identity in respondents dialogue is applied to Arab identity or country of origin as interchangeable with Muslim identity.

it goes back to my religion because Palestine and Islam are intertwined, but at the same time, my country of origin has a lot to do with my identity. I might not like, I might not um, wear a thobe everyday, I might not eat Palestinian food everyday, but my culture is also really important to me. I guess it’s like what I am first, or what I was first sort of… so before anything I’m Muslim, then I’m Palestinian, and then I’m American because America is … it’s where I lived my entire life, but I would never choose America over Palestine. I prefer like living here because obviously living here is what I’m used to, but um, if I had to choose between the two… and there’s no going back, I would choose Palestine.

Muslim identity in the U.S. is the most salient identity to respondents in this study. This intersection of ethnicity and religion, especially for Muslim respondents may be due to the religious marginalization of Muslims in the U.S. The majority of respondents (60%) in this study select religion, Islam, as the most important dimension of their identity.

My religion is who I am. That represents me. The way I act, the way I dress, the way I interact with others. And it's my daily life, is my religion. Everything I do, you know, I pray, I fast, I, you know, Islam teaches us basically life itself. The way you should treat others, the way you should be with others.
I feel like my faith is important because it brings a lot of guidance in my world. Like I told you I’m more spiritual connected. Yeah I wear the scarf, but do I pray all the time, no… I have that inner within myself that I’m still trying to fight. I feel like this is really my key through those times, or even when I’m happy or struggling, I still go back to who I am and my faith. You know, if all this don’t exist, this [religion] is good enough in my life.

Second generation Arab Muslims in the U.S. prioritize their religious identity to that of a pan-ethnic Arab identity, which is parallel to findings in existing scholarly research (Pew Research Center 2011; Naber 2012).

I feel like I grew up with a strong Muslim identity and Arab was secondary. Still important, but it was secondary… - Nada

Respondents prioritize their religious identity as Muslim, in comparison to their racial, gender, pan-ethnic identity as Middle Eastern, national identity as American, and specific country of origin e.g. Palestinian, Syrian, Jordanian (Table 1-1).

And your religion is the most important thing in your life?

I think that that’s the most significant thing in my life. As much as I’m Arab and that’s a big culture, to me, it’s the one thing that I’m constantly going back to. It is one thing that I’m constant with, like I constantly go back to. And it might be because I wore the hijab and when I wore the hijab I wore it for political reasons or trying to change a stereotype or whatever, but I still wear it because of God. And at the end of the day, it is something that’s prescribed to me in the Quran and it’s my constant remembrance of God.

Of the four Christian respondents in this study, two select religion as their primary identity card, and they both provide faith-driven explanations. Marco illustrates this point:

If you don’t have Jesus in your life that’s really what counts. Everything else it doesn’t make a difference, it doesn’t matter. Money is temporary, life is temporary. You’re not gonna be on earth forever. If you’re trying to get into the gates of heaven, religion plays a big role. – Marco
The other two select Arab American and Palestinian. Nonetheless, when Christian participants select religion as one of their top three cards, some of their reasons differ from their Muslim counterparts.

cause of the fact that not many people are aware of that Christian communities exist in the Middle East, which just, due to stereotypes and stuff. Which I feel is important to let people be aware that there are other people that, it’s not just the generalization of one group of people. It’s just a generalization of an entire community that are diverse in and of itself.

Christian respondents express their religious minority status in the Arab world as invisible due to the generalizations and stereotypes of Arabs in the U.S.

The Importance of Religious Identity

before I’m Palestinian, before I’m anything else, I’m a Muslim, so my core beliefs, my core… my moral standards, anything that sort of makes my foundation is related to my religion… - Buha, Muslim woman of Palestinian ancestry

Muslims are currently 1% of the U.S. population (Mohamed 2016). They are also a minority group when accounting for persons with Arab ancestry in the U.S., at 24% in comparison to Christian Arabs at 60% (Lipka 2014). Muslims in the U.S. are considered a minority group based on proportions to the Christian majority, in addition to the discriminatory treatment that is targeted toward the group.

Islamaphobia has significantly increased after September 11th, producing discrimination in the labor market (Davila and Mora 2005; Rabby 2009), and elevated hate crimes (Garner and Selod 2014) – including vandalizing mosques and group member property, physically attacking and/or threatening group members, to name a few. Muslim women who wear a hijab, which signifies their religious practice, are highly visible in western societies, where Muslims are a minority. Due to their visibility, Muslim
women have been used to exemplify intolerance of Islam (Zolberg and Long 1999), and they have been primary targets of hate crimes in the U.S. (Cainkar 2009).

This is the first thing they always see, my religion… and to me it took me a lot to appreciate… - Lubna

According to the American Psychological Association, “compared to other crimes, hate crimes have a broader impact on victims and communities because they target core aspects of identity.” These sentiments resonate with respondents, who internalize anti-Muslim messages from their societal context – whether the message is directly or indirectly target them through a group member.

Growing up I’ve seen a lot towards my mom. So, a lot… cause you know, right after 9/11, like, I’ve heard people tell my mom things like, ‘I hump camels.’ I will never forget that day. - Anton

The resurgence of the veil has been reported as politically motivated by Muslim women as a commitment to activism, transnationally, after 9/11 (Ahmed 2011). This is the case for Salwa, who decided to wear hijab two years after 9/11, when she was in eighth grade.

So when I wore hijab, hijab to me was like my, “Ask me about Islam” button. This is who I am, and if you have something to say, ask me, because I could have easily grown up not hijabed and just live my life and nobody would have known I was Muslim… so it was June 2003 when I wore it [hijab]… when I wore the hijab, I constantly tell myself, well, I’m wearing the hijab, I’m setting an example, everybody assumes I’m Arab, they don’t know I’m Arab, but everybody assumes I’m Arab because they just equate Muslim with Arab. So they way I act, the way I present myself, people are going to equate that with Arab…. So it became the way I live my life… - Salwa

As Salwa describes, her religious identity is used as a proxy to present a positive image of Arabs and Muslims, which are both understood as a monolith. The marginalization of Arabs and Islam in the U.S. signify the importance to embody or select religion as a salient part of one’s identity. The identity formation of Muslims and
Arabs in America are heavily impacted by post-9/11 discrimination and the stigmatization targeting their religious and national identities (Kunst et al. 2011; Cainkar 2009).

Naber (2005) explains that a “Muslim First” framework has been shaped by a combination of post-1980 politics, including U.S. expansion in Muslim majority countries (e.g. Iraq, Palestine), Islamaphobia (local and global), and a rise of Muslim global political movements. The Iranian Revolution (also referred to as the Islamic Revolution), which took place in 1979, confronted westernization in Muslim countries, and sparked a global Muslim consciousness. The “Islamic revival,” as Lapidus (1997) explains, is understood as a contemporary movement – a reaction to economic (capitalism) and colonial (state) power – and a cultural expression of modernity. With most respondent’s parents emigrating from Palestine to the Chicago after 1980, the Arab immigrant community had a focus on building religious institutions (schools, mosque) in Bridgeview to sustain Islamic values in their children. These Islamic institutions, and The Mosque Foundation in Bridgeview, facilitate in the social cohesion among the Muslim community members in the Chicagoland area. The first generation, then, could be recognized as instrumental in shaping their children’s strong Muslim identity. Together, these global and local social influences also motivate millennials interest in political activism.

Religious stigma establishes a major obstacle for individual American national affiliation. Second generation Muslims in Western Europe hold on to their religious identity – departing from their ethnic identity (not French, Dutch, or German, or as Algerians, Moroccans, or Turks) (Foner and Alba 2008), which is similar to pattern of
Arab American Muslims in the U.S. who identify primarily as Muslim (Pew Research Center 2011; Naber 2005).

Persons with high group identity – such as Arab Muslims in this study – may increase their identification to their group as a coping mechanism to addressing a stigmatized identity (Branscombe et al 1999). In comparison, low group identity members – such as Arab Christians – may distance themselves from identifying as Arabs or may specify their religious affiliation to deter discrimination. Major and O’Brien (2005) discover that identification patterns weigh heavily on perceived group discrimination based on whether individuals challenge or confirm the worldview of their group. Jacob and Marco are both Christian, and they both occasionally share their religious identity with non-Arabs to challenge stereotypes of the Arab collective group in the west. They articulate their views as follows:

In regards to people outside of the Arab community, I find it extremely important [to share religious identity] because of the fact that there’s a stereotype that all Arabs are Muslims, and all Arabs are terrorists, and all Arabs are aggressive. It just, I like to tell people that I’m Christian just to show them that this isn’t just an issue with Muslims versus America or something. That there are other people living there… different regions in the Middle East have their own different cultures and stuff so although the media shows that the Arabs – these are aggressive people – it’s not even nearly true at all. I feel like just the fact that I’m saying I’m Christian also helps relay to the people who are Christian in America who don’t really know that there are Christians in the Middle East. – Jacob, Palestinian ancestry

When someone asks you what race/ethnicity are you, what do you say?

I’m Arab-Palestinian’ sometimes I say ‘Christian’ though.

Why?

Because the majority of Arabs are Muslims… I want them to know that I’m not Muslim.

- Marco, Palestinian ancestry
Jacob and Marco’s responses illustrate their attempt to contextualize Arab by including group religious affiliation, which suggests an inclusive identity dimension to minimize social stigma. Additionally, group members with stigmatized identities decrease their national identification as a coping strategy (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2009). Religious associations offer a sense of belonging, and strengthening ethnic ties, which protect immigrant ethnic identity (Zhou and Bankston 1994). Additionally, religious identities can offer a sense of inclusion and ethnic identification that is rooted in tradition and culture (Foner and Alba 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). This social capital through affiliation with a religious institution facilitates ethno-religious identity preservation. Thus, religion can be used as a vehicle in which immigrants feel accepted into the host culture (Karpathakis 2001: 390).

According to the Pew Research Survey (2011), most Muslims (49%) and Christians (46%) in the U.S. identify first by their religious affiliation. However, in comparison, Muslims consider themselves American at a significantly lower rate (26%) than Christians (46%). This suggests that religious identity may be an important part of individual identity (Muslim or Christian), however, American national identification in particular can waver depending on a country’s dominant religious affiliation.

Arab and Muslim assimilation (measured by inter-marriage rates) in the U.S. decreased after September 11, and in turn, social capital investments within their ethnic and religious communities increased (Gould and Klor 2013; Mason and Matella 2014). Religious spaces allow immigrants an opportunity to “worship with co-ethnics in settings with many tangible reminders and expressions of home-country cultures, so a sense of ethnic identity is nurtured and strengthened” (Foner and Alba 2008: 363). Respondent’s
connect or disconnect with their ethnic self through perceived ethno-religious group presence. This level of comfort, or connectedness, occurs during family gatherings, or events (weddings, attending to sahrat [parties], political protests, holidays e.g. Eid, Ramadan, New Years, July 4th). Respondents generally describe places where co-ethnics assemble as closely tied to their place of residence. Only four of the thirty-seven participants in this study were Christian, and they all lived on the north/northwest side of the city/suburbs. The dominance of Arab Muslims in Bridgeview, alongside the social capital within this particular community, limits the inclusion of Arab Christians in the community.

**U.S. Census data and the Race Question**

In light of the potential emerging racial and ethnic categories presented by government officials for the 2020 U.S. Census, this research situates these identification categories into a broader context. Members who belong to the Arab community are able to place race under scrutiny, as they articulate their relationship to state-given category through diverse narratives. One’s understanding of racial selections, the purpose for its enumeration, and/or their societal discriminatory treatment, for instance, are used as conditions to determine racial self-identification.

While some members perceive the white racial selection as a way of deterring discrimination, at least on paper, others argue that the classification is not coordinated with their phenotype, history, and/or social standing and treatment. Although respondents challenge white racial classification, they are also noted to be skeptical of government officials and perceive “white” as beneficial in terms of possibility avoiding discrimination. This group discrimination (perceived and actual), especially from
government and institutions, can present a challenge in collecting data for 2020 should a Middle Eastern North African (MENA) category become available.

The data in this study illustrate that the children of Arab immigrants construct their ethnic identity in comparison to that of other ethnics (e.g. Hispanics, African Americans, others) and non-ethnics (whites). Because of this association with marginalized groups, they deem their white state-given racial category as presenting a false sense of privilege. Many do not find that they benefit from the moral capital of being a victim, which adds to their avoidance of whiteness. Due to instrumental reasons on forms, their minority status is challenged by the state (educational, government assistance). This situates their argument as one where they are not taking part in this ethnic group competition.

Despite previous research stating that the children of immigrants report their identity in alignment to an assigned category (Waters 1999) in this sample, many group members resist and challenge them. The political activism and consciousness of respondents may be a condition that increases their contestation and negotiation of their state imposed racial classifications. Respondent’s self-awareness is based on considerations of the political climate of their host society, group stigmatization, and discrimination. The power of a dominant organization (state) assigning labels (white) results with Arabs feeling estranged politically and socially from whites; they do not deem the label a good fit. For many group members, this tension creates an ethnic boundary, deviating from the dominant group, in turn solidifying ethnic or religious self-identification (Islam; Middle Eastern or by country of origin). Group members’ contest their lack of political power and social status. The self-determination process is
relational, based on one’s understanding, and reflections of political, collective, and individual experiences (Smith 1996).

Today, most Arabs do not deem their state-given racial category as relevant for their integration in society. They are aware of the symbolic markers that signify their difference and they often challenge the dominant racial identity that was desired by their predecessors in the late nineteenth century. The change of power dynamics, between the state and its citizens has shifted over time. As opposed to the early 1900’s, where citizens were coerced into a racial category based on the state’s policies (immigration), more recently, they challenge these bureaucratic decisions. Unlike the early 1900’s, being a victim is now a source of moral capital; therefore, there are some advantages for being non-white. The power of the state is no longer unidirectional; administrative racial categories, and truth, are being disputed, creating a greater relational power between citizens and state actors.
CHAPTER 4
ARAB AND PALESTINIAN IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Yesterday I went out, with me and my mom… I got shawirma [meat dish] for myself and my mom wanted Wendy’s [laughs]. And I went to get thobie [Arab dress]… the lady was showing me very, I guess modern takes on the thobe, but it looked more like a dress – a dress you would find at like Macy’s. It has flowers and stuff, and I was like ‘no, no I want, you know, the traditional black and red dress’ and then she’s like ‘oh!’ then my mom was like ‘this girl, she’s so traditional’ for me as opposed to like my parents experience… I feel like our generation of Arab Americans… we have more confidence in who we are as opposed to our parents generation who tried so hard to mainstream themselves. – Baseema

Children of immigrants are the fastest growing child population and are reported as transforming the racial and ethnic composition of the United States (Hernandez 2009). Immigrants and their children are transformed by their integration and identification to their host country through the migration process. The assimilation of the second generation depends on the human and financial capital of their parents, in addition to the social conditions of the host country – making these patterns segmented1.

Borrowing from Alba and Nee’s (2003) definition of assimilation as “the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary social and cultural differences” (11), we are able to describe the boundary patterns of ethnic groups, as well as the assimilation patterns that occur over generations. The process of “boundary crossing” from bright (unambiguous, social markers) to blurred (ambiguous) (Alba 2005: 22) is symbolic (Lamont and Molnar 2002) making them socially and culturally distinct.

To answer questions about the self (e.g. who am I?), ethnic group members can self-identify in ways that they culturally differ (or resemble) from Anglo-Americans and minority groups. These social boundaries are negotiated by individual preferences that

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1 The segmented assimilation process is described as: assimilating into the dominant culture or not, combined with economic mobility or assimilating into the lower class with poverty (Portes and Zhou 1993).
derive from a value-laden system, introduced by the family and social setting, and internalized by the self (Zuckerman 2004; Goffman 1959). Social boundaries facilitate individual decisions about group membership, ethnic labels and their meanings, and cultural significance. Ethnic identity, therefore, can be used to determine group members’ position in relation to their surrounding environment (social cohesion with co-ethnics, the dominant group). This chapter has two specific tasks: The first is to deliver the boundaries of ethnic membership, as articulated by members of the second generation; and the second involves how these boundaries are negotiated amongst their co-ethnic counterparts in defining group membership or “ethnic authenticity.”

The development of ethnic identity calls for the exploration of three areas – one’s family, social setting, and the individual. Parents’ cultural connections can influence children human capital investments (Chiswick 2009). These patterns develop through, and are reinforced by, social networks (Coleman 1988; Bandura 1977). For instance, parental engagement in ethnic organizations can guide the ethnic development of the second generation (Waters 1994). Children form relational patterns of behavior and attitudes based on a set of beliefs and values that they form through these individual experiences. Generally, cultural attitudes are transmitted within ethnic communities through vertical (from parents to children) and horizontal (from peers in the community) relationships (Furtado et al. 2013). Nonetheless, alternative social conditions, such as immigration patterns (Jimenez 2010), social stigma or discrimination (Mackie and Smith 1998), are some factors that can shape immigrant societal views as well as that of their children.
The integration process of first and second generation is contingent upon a number of factors that varies for each group. Involuntary markers (Goffman 1959), such as skin color, contribute to this inevitable, multidimensional, structural (Gordon 1964) process. The assistance of institutions can work as a form of social capital (e.g. government, religious, multigenerational ties) that promotes social connections (e.g. ethnic, transnational) for immigrants and their children. The degree of social capital is key in the socialization practices for immigrants and their children, since it can foster a sense of ancestral and cultural connections (Rumbaut 2002).

Institutions play a significant role in building social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1973). Cultural capital, also referred to as the social assets (e.g. resources), support upward mobility and vary by social class and family life (Lareau 2003). Institutional power and influence, along with familial cultural and religious preferences, result in specific social and educational developmental attainment for children (religious, linguistic, social networks). Children of immigrants experience a different level of comfort within institutions depending on their class status (e.g. education Goldrick-Rab 2006; Knighton & Mirza 2002). For instance, the personal, emotional and financial support of first-generation students is reported to affect their college attendance (Lohfink and Paulsen 2005).

**Ethnic Formation Process**

Race, ethnicity and national identity formation are complex concepts that are in flux. Scholars agree that these concepts are historically and socially constructed, with various meaning depending on time and space (Barth 1969; Jenkins 1997; Fenton 2010; Khazzoom 2008). The formation of ethnicity has a number of social, political, economic, and local interests (Fenton 2010).
Shils (1957) and Geertz (1973) describe ethnic origins and attachments as those that are perceived as primordial, positivist and fixed, biological or “natural.” Shils and Geertz take a social constructivist perspective, which criticize primordial discourse, concluding that it does not account for migration processes or mixed “blood.” In other words, they frame primordialism itself as a social construction. Rejecting the primordial discourse, social constructionists argue that ethnic boundaries are produced and maintained by group members. Thus, a production of meaning reproduces ethnic group boundaries (Geertz 1973; Barth 1969; Jenkins 1997; Cohen 1993; Eller & Coughlan 1993; Nagel 1994; Ecklund 2005; Wimmer 2008).

Barth (1969b) who initially stated “cultural stuff” did not matter in ethnic relations, later concluded that cultural differences in fact play an important role in boundary setting among ethnic groups. Ethnic boundaries are not fixed; they exist in a continuum that may unite (e.g. cultural practices) or divide (reinforcing differences) populations. Yet, ethnic boundaries can be changed by assimilation (Wimmer 2008). The stability of ethnic boundaries depends on the particular identification method of group members. Stable boundaries are defined through genealogical terms and are reproduced over generations. On the other hand, unstable boundaries are defined by behavior and lifestyle, independent of one’s ancestry and/or parental ethnic background (Astuti 1995). Wimmer (2008) argues that ethnic formation produces various outcomes, which can be created, maintained and destroyed by the actors. The boundary distinctions that actors negotiate “support their claims to prestige, moral worth, and political power” (1007). Dependent on the social field (institutional, power dynamics and networks), the features of one’s ethnic boundaries may vary.
Boundaries are maintained by culture and group interaction. Inter-ethnic relations and group boundaries are established through both, the group identification and social categorization, therefore, inclusion-exclusion criteria arise at the presence of another group. Actors are able to identify group members using verbal and non-verbal cues, along with criteria that maintain social control through public and private behavior that is deemed appropriate (Jenkins 1997). Internalization of identity can be presented as a projection of what the audience or members of society expect of group members (Goffman 1959; Cross 1971). The social interaction provides the exchange of presenting oneself in front of others; the self and public image interact in producing social identity (Goffman 1959). For instance, Jenkins (1997) explains that one’s occupational identification ranks high in their social identity, since it influences social status and economic stability. Thus, the social interactions of groups can be applied to institutions just as they are applied to the social status of individuals in the labor market.

**Changing Over Time**

Ethnic identity is one of many social identities that change over time (Cha 2002; Phinney and Chavira 1992; Phinney 1993), maturing with age (Newman 2005). Previous research on intergroup relations has shed some light on the attitudes (e.g. racial attitudes, prejudice) ethnic groups have toward one another, indicating implications for intergroup relations (Worchel 1999). Capturing data on attitudes and development is helpful in gaining perspective on relationships of groups in a particular setting. It can also shed light on group curiosity toward members of other race and ethnic groups (Johnston 1999) and a member’s sense of self (Goffman 1959; Phinney 1989).
Second generation Indian-Americans, for example, report being embarrassed by traditional cultural traits (speaking Hindi, dress – wearing Indian sarongs) in public, distancing themselves from those who display these customary (or non-dominant) ethnic identifiers (Kalita 2003). Despite moving away from tradition e.g. “Indian culture” and toward a modern, e.g. “American” culture, some members of the second generation rediscover their ethnic identity in college (Shankar 2008). Similarly, although second generation Vietnamese children and adolescent identify with white, they intentionally learn about their cultural and ethnic heritage as young adults (Thai 1999).

Although ethnic identity development is not necessarily linear (Waterman 1982), researchers find that it may mature with age (Newman 2005). Persons who decide to commit after exploration have an “achieved” or secure identity (Marcia 1966; Phinney 1992; 1997). Researchers have found that young adults who have an achieved ethnic identity had more positive attitudes, understanding, and awareness of intergroup relations than those whose ethnic identity was considered diffuse (Phinney et. al 1997).

According to developmental theory, persons with well-developed ethnic identity are “more open,” and receptive to the ethnic identity of others (Phinney 2007). On the other hand, the lack of ethnic identity exploration and commitment results with having a diffuse identity. Having negative attitudes toward a group that is not ones race or ethnicity e.g. discrimination can also surface (Mackie & Smith 1998). These attitudes may occur due to having a fear of strangers (Aboud 1998) or persons gravitating toward

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2 Measured using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney 1992), which was initiated from Marcia’s (1966) ego identity development.
their own group members as they perceive other groups as inferior to their own (Tajfel and Turner 1986).

**Findings and Analysis**

**Setting Boundaries: Geographic Locale**

Children of Arab immigrants describe Arab membership by using geographic locale (e.g. North Africa, Middle East, Gulf region, Saudi Arabia, Syria), most commonly reference the Arab League’s geographic description, which includes parts of the Middle East and North Africa – “the twenty-two Arab countries.” The majority of respondents agree that the definition of Arab differs between those in the geographic region of the Levant, and members who live outside of this region. For instance, some respondents’ state Iranians are not Arab “…cause people from Iran would be Persian” (Samir, 33 years old, Palestinian Muslim). This description of Arab membership is sometimes solidified by responses from the Iranian community. Jacob, who is Palestinian American Christian, shares an exchange between him and an Iranian friend where she explicitly confirms Iranian ethnic exclusion, “we’re not Arab, we’re Persian.” Only two of the thirty-nine participants in this study include Iran as part of the group Arab. Aside from Iran, Israel is the only additional country respondents exclude from the Arab category. Julie, a Christian woman of Jordanian ancestry, illustrates that geographic locale in itself is limited in defining Arabs. Her response, “being from the Middle East… just all the countries except for Israel,” like the majority of participants, places the geographic location “the Middle East” as an important criteria. However, a further exploration of inclusion and exclusion criteria is necessary to explain these descriptions.
Social Considerations: Language and Culture

The second most recurring theme that participants use to articulate Arab membership is centered on “people that speak the language” (Marco, Palestinian Christian). Most respondents describe an Arab as someone who demonstrates linguistic fluency in Arabic. Respondents reinforce language as a powerful component to Arab group membership, “even though there is so many different dialects…” (Baseema, Palestinian-Muslim) because “it’s the one thing we can all agree on” (Salwa, Palestinian-Muslim). Thus, respondents describe being Arab as “a linguistic group,” which follows regional locale.

Due to linguistic overlap, respondents include Somalis and Sudanese persons as Arab. However, some respondents set boundaries on dialect. Algerians, Saudis, Moroccans, and Egyptians are some of the countries respondents include as deviating from being considered as “fully Arab.”

with Algerians […] and like Moroccans, it's like all whole different language, like, you can't even, you don't even understand like what they're saying… Saudi [also]. – Farhah, Palestinian-Muslim

Morocco would for example can be considered an Arab country but their main dialect is not Arabic its almost French derived, so I don't consider them fully Arabs… When I talk about somebody who’s Arab it’s somebody who fluently speaks Arabic. – Hibah, Palestinian-Muslim

Respondent describe encounters with members of Egyptian ancestry who did not consider themselves Arab.

I do know people who are Egyptian that don’t like to be called Arab… they just like to be called Egyptian, but in the grand scheme of things, at the end of the day, they’re Egyptian that’s fine but they’re also Arab because they speak Arabic and their culture. – Naha, Palestinian-Muslim

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3 The majority of participation in this study was second-generation members of Palestinian ancestry; however, the majority of Arab Americans in the U.S. are of Egyptian ancestry, followed by Lebanese.
I think anybody who speaks Arabic, who lives within the bounds of the Middle East like, even North Africans, who like culturally have similar culture to the Middle East I think they’re considered Arab… – Baseema, Palestinian-Muslim

I think there’s a certain amount of self-identification as Arab, so um, you know people that are from like, Egypt can classify themselves as African technically if they wanted to, but because of the culture, they’re Arab.” – Afifah, Muslim-Palestinian

In these cases, Egyptians themselves are noted as articulating cultural boundaries as unstable (defined by behavior and lifestyle, not ancestry or parental ethnic background). Still, participants continue to account for Egyptians as Arabs, regardless of the dialogue that had taken place with persons of Egyptian ancestry. Cultural similarities transcend geographic locale, when participants include Egyptians in the Arab ethnic group.

The general consensus among children of immigrants, regarding the description of Arab group membership, is based on geographical or regional space that Arab group members share. This shared space is most commonly, and abstractly, described as the “Middle East.” More specifically, most participants include countries in the Levant, or el sham [in Arabic], including Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq. Others extend the geographical region to include surrounding areas in the Middle East, most commonly, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sudan, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia.

General characteristics of the Arab person include having good manners, so “not too loud in public” and “kareem [generous]” (Banan). Someone who is family oriented or sacrificing for the family is deemed a respected trait. The contestation of whether respondents loosen Arab group membership to include persons outside the Levant region is based on linguistic variation – i.e. Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. A country’s official language, and a person’s fluency begin to factor into defining an Arab. However,
language is perceived as a fixed prerequisite to belonging to the ethnic group.

Interestingly, due to the second generation losing their Arabic fluency themselves, respondents negotiate these boundaries accordingly.

the characteristic that makes you Arab is having family that traces back to the homeland. I feel like we would exclude people, cause I’ve seen it so many times where I have felt excluded cause I don’t know the Arabic language, or I don’t come from a traditional sort of family as other Arabs…. If you could trace someone back home, or if your great grandparents are from back home – to me, you’re an Arab. – Rubaa, Palestinian Muslim woman

Every criterion is strategically used to include some people, and exclude others. For instance, religion may be a factor for inclusion (Islam), where language may determine exclusion. Cultural considerations are less important in comparison to region and language.

**Physical Attributes**

Respondents describe the general physical appearance of an Arab both, negatively and positively. Respondents portray the Arab person as someone with dark and/or curly hair; dark or big/deeper set eyes, generally hairy – e.g. eyebrows, more facial hair, olive or tan to dark skin, a bigger - and crooked - nose. Additional comments include behavioral traits, being “louder with their opinion” (Randa), and gendered characteristics of men (someone who smokes), and for women (wears a hijab). At times, participants denote physical characteristics to a particular country of origin. For instance, Anton states, “most Lebanese people are very white, or most Egyptian people are very dark.”

Most of them around here [Bridgeview area]… dark hair, big eyes, lashes, eyebrows, accent… thicker, not pronounced English and vowels. – Afaf

Afaf, a college student who was born and raised in the Bridgeview, tailors her ethnic group characteristics on her familiar surrounding in a densely populated Arab area.
Some descriptions of an Arab are closely comparable with the dominant narrative, filtered through a western perspective of the Orient, as described by Said (1979). Respondents articulate this as “they’re usually dark-skinned… their beards” or “the dark hair, the dark eyes, the olive skin… how hairy they are.” On the other hand, some participants reflect upon their personal social network and incorporate a wider description into their narratives. Direct associations and recollections of persons who are Arab modify this fixed Orient view. For instance, Samir states that he has cousins that “have blonde hair and blue eyes.” Similarly, Baseema and Duha describe physical variations in their descriptions as well, deriving from their social ties.

I don’t wanna say how we look because it’s so varied. Like my friend is Sudani and she looks very different than me, and she considers herself Arab. – Baseema, Muslim-Palestinian

my dad has pretty much all dark hair, black eyes, dark skin. On my mom’s side they have actually pretty much like blue eyes, there’s blonde, they’re pretty white and everything. I feel like Arabs have more than one look. – Duha, Muslim-Palestinian

Some respondents challenge dominant descriptions into their storyline. Others describe stereotypes, and in the same narrative, they are able to challenge this image. Social ties to the Arab community facilitate in challenging Arab stereotypical descriptions. Relationships with members of the Arab community were fairly important, since having family or friends who deviate from stereotypes widen the range of possible physical, and social descriptions of the group. Descriptions of the “Arab” person generally extend into a dialogue that encompasses geographic, linguistic, primordial, social, cultural and religious awareness.

Respondent’s describe positive traits as “…very generous, like we’re very quick to offer whatever’s in our hand or, you know, like feed someone or take care of them, or
you know what I mean, be friendly” and generally social. Generosity and hospitality are two traits that are consistently mentioned when respondents describe the Arab person. These attributes increase social cohesion among members, and participation in services within the community.

Negative group traits, on the other hand, create tension within the community that distance members from one another. Behavioral traits, such as gossip, stubbornness, ‘being loud,’ and sexism interrupt group harmony.

They talk loud –They gossip! Sometimes they’re kind of annoying. Nosey. – Layal

They smoke a lot and they can be loud… can be pushy. – Julie

I think our mentality. We’re very stubborn people. – Dalal

They’re very sexist, um, it doesn’t matter what religion you are its just Arabs, I fee like there’s still, like guys still have the upper hand like, they still need to get though that, they need to get that through their head that ok, no guys aren’t the more superior gender. Like, we’re equal, you know, and I feel like Arabs just have that stuck in their head and it’s all culture, like it’s not religion. And I’m gonna speak from like, an Islamic point of view right now. Like, that is totally against Islam and so many people have that engraved in their head that they make it as if ‘no that’s how it is in our religion ‘no it’s not honey’ its not. It’s totally against our religion, this is all culture. – Farhah

Social ties appear to influence individual perceptions of wealth and social norms (more in “Life in and out of ‘Little Palestine’”). Therefore, social characteristics emerge based on class status.

for the most part they’re pretty well off. Like most of the Arab people I know are pretty well off. Umm, a lot of them own their own business. - Samir

As such, respondents describe the Arab person as wealthy, owning businesses and living a comfortable lifestyle. Intra-group gender inequalities also emerge and are based on social and cultural sets of privileges (CH 6: Gendered Traditions).
Religious Considerations

Participants also use religion as a proxy for Arab ethnic group inclusion. Layal, a Muslim women of Palestinian ancestry, includes Iran and Turkey. She recognizes the linguistic differences of the countries, but generalizes her description of Arabs. In doing so, she prioritizes the Middle East and North African region and majority Muslim population in the region.

When you think about the group Arab, whom would you include in this group?

Layal: All the Middle Eastern – all the Arab speaking countries, you know, including part of North Africa and... you know, I consider Turkey and Iran Arabs, even though in Iran they speak Farsi and Turkey they don't speak [Arabic], but, I feel like if you're Muslim, and you know Arabie [Arabic], you're Arab.

Although respondents seldom mention Islam as a direct inclusion condition to describe Arabs, they use Arab and Islam interchangeably throughout their interviews (a similar trend occurs with the terms Arab and Middle Eastern). Some group members recognize religion, Islam in particular, as an overlap to ethnic identification. However, others emphasize that the pan-ethnic group Arab is not an ethno-religious group. Jamal, who is of Palestinian ancestry and a practicing Muslim, explains how Americans often conflate Muslims and Arabs:

When you think about the group Arab, who would you include in this group?

Jamal: Okay, I have two – when I think of Arab, I think of geography first and foremost. 'Cuz I think that's an easier way for people to conceptualize what that means. So, part of the Arab world. The Arab world primarily encompasses twenty-two countries, most of them are in North Africa and to the East of that. Stretching all the way to Iraq. So that entire area I would consider the Arab world. But I like to make the distinction when I think of Arab, think of the nationality – or race, if you will – distinct from religion. But in this country, it seems like it's interwoven. Concept of culture, ethnicity and also religion. They [Arabs] make up ten percent of the Muslim world. So, I think of it in terms of the twenty-two countries. So, in geographic terms first and foremost. Then I think of it in terms of language.
Some respondents did state, “I feel like if you’re Muslim, and you know Arabie [Arabic], you’re Arab” (Layal, Muslim woman of Palestinian ancestry). Layal, for instance, highlights religious affiliation as a way of gaining ethnic membership. She refers to her friend who converted to Islam as an example, “… she’s Mexican, but she converted, and she’s basically, she’s very Arabieh, you know.” Layal merges Arab ethno-cultural traits with Muslim religious standards. However, as mentioned in Jamal’s dialogue, participants generally recognized Arabs as having a range of religious affiliations. Dalal, a Muslim-woman of Jordanian/Palestinian ancestry, illustrates this point:

when I say Arab, I feel like people associate it as being Islamic. No. It can be Christian, can be Muslim. Can be anything.

In comparison, the Christian population in this study (n=4/37), generally define Arab ethnic boundaries similarly to their Muslim counterparts when they articulate the group collectively – in terms of geographic, social, and physical, attributes:

Being from the Middle East. So Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates. You know, just all the countries except for Israel. And then as far as attributes and characteristics, we talked about – they smoke a lot, and they can be loud, dark-haired and hairy. [laughs] Can be pushy. But also have a great sense of pride and hospitality. – Julie, Jordanian ancestry

Anyone from the Arab, the 22 Arab countries. Just anyone from the Middle East who’s affiliated with the culture, I would say…the typical conservative viewpoints of like the, as diverse as the Arab community is, there isn’t really a general culture, but like, let’s say like self respect, respecting your family, everything you do is reflecting on your family image type understanding of culture, I guess. – Jacob, Palestinian ancestry

Despite religious affiliation, all participants’ prefer intra-religious marriages: Muslims with Muslims, and Christians with Christians. Many respondents filter their reasons through parental preferences and/or continuing their commitment to their faith (Generational
variation for further details). Respondent’s endogamous preferences suggest that Arab identity is divided based on religious affiliation. Group members’ perceptions of Arab are ethno-religious, as Arab-Muslims and Arab-Christians. This intersection of ethnicity and religion produces distinct communities, who are religiously segregated. Arab, therefore, is not simply a collective group or identity; rather, it is an ethno-religious group.

**Negotiating Ethnic Authenticity**

**Social Constructions to the Self: Stable and Unstable Boundaries**

My genes, my mom is Arab, my ancestors are all Arab, so that makes me Arab… I’m not American. I’m Palestinian. That’s in my blood. That’s who I am. That’s where my family’s from, my family wasn’t, are not from, America. No matter what passport says, we’re not American, we’re Palestinian. – Maya, Palestinian Muslim woman

Respondents articulate group belonging as an ancestral inheritance; however, they believe ethnic identity could change over time. The primordial ties Maya describes are based on stable boundaries. She connects her ethnic identity to that of her ancestors, her family history, and her blood. This places her national identity as secondary and unstable. Ancestral, or primordial, ties rank as important characteristics to Arab identification. Someone “who at one point [was] born or has one generation or another that’s Middle Eastern… anyone who has at least one parent that is Arab” (Nada, Muslim Palestinian) is a prerequisite. Here, Afifah, Baseema, and Maysa – all Muslim women of Palestinian ancestry – illustrate this primordial connection in their descriptions e.g. roots, descendants.

You have to have descendants from Middle Eastern countries, in general. – Afifah

I’d go back to just the language itself and then everybody – within the Arab countries have roots – Baseema

Where you come from, the country . . . like where your roots are. – Maysa
Similarly, Duha, Maya, and Animeh – also all of Muslim Palestinian women – agree that ethnic identity is something that exists “inside of you” in one’s “genes” – connecting it with ancestral, primordial, features.

It does not matter if you were born here or not if you have some Arabic heritage inside of you, you’re Arabic. – Duha

My genes, my mom is Arab, my ancestors are all Arab, so that makes me Arab. – Maya

Some people say I'm not Palestinian because I wasn't born there. I think it has a lot to do with your ancestors. – Animeh

Children of Arab immigrants alter the primordial argument as consider how they themselves fit the characteristics they describe for the group. For instance, since many respondents are less fluent in Arabic than parents, and/or are born in the U.S., they deemphasize ancestral native tongue and reinforce ancestral geographic spaces as a precursor to Arab identity.

I can’t say a person who speaks Arabic because a lot of us now, we’re Arab but we don’t speak Arabic cause we’re not as good at it since they’re second or third generation, but [having] an ancestry who speaks Arab, and from an Arab country, like your parents or above [older generations]. – Najwa, Palestinian-Muslim woman

Najwa alters her description of Arabic fluency and bases her description on generational status of the Diasporic community and geo-cultural changes to secure her membership.

The Arab ethnic negotiation process as inherited is also based on ones familiarity with social, cultural and religious characteristics. Respondents negotiate their inclusion into the ethnic group by wavering between a primordialism and constructionist argument. Therefore, respondents describe ethnic formation as a socialization process that can be passed down from one generation to the next. Children of immigrants play an active role
in acquiring their ethnic and cultural knowledge, and their direct lineage to the first
generation validates their membership.

even though I live in America and I’m Americanized […] you’re still
surrounded by the old [first] generation and you pick up from that and
that’s who you are. So I feel like it is from your ancestry. – Malakah,
Muslim-Palestinian

Malakah lives in Bridgeview and is surrounded by first-generation Arabs, which appears
to influence her perspective of the group.

**Ethnic Raw Material: The First Generation**

I think there’s always a sense of pride within your ethnicity that gets
passed down, from generation to generation. I think that depending on
how you’re raised and how your family keeps up with that will help you. –
Rula

The first generation itself is perceived as naturally possessing “ethnic raw materials,”
which is defined as “ethnically linked symbols and practices that are necessary for the
construction of a salient ethnic identity” (Jimenez 2010: 102). This definition is formed
from Alba’s (1990) ethnic identity construction as produced through access of cultural
resources, including social, ethnic or political experiences in their country of origin.
Majda states that her parents have taught her Arab culture “just by our interactions, our
behavior… from the very beginning, its what you learn from what the family does” again,
reinforcing the role of the family and her parents in gaining ethnic authenticity.

Ethnic raw materials are used to secure cultural transmission from one generation to
the next. The first generation attempted to sustain their children’s Arab traditions and
culture in their host society through institutional enrollment e.g. learning Arabic and
Islam, alongside cultural retention as a familial process. The supportive roles that
parents and institutions play has, in large part, determined how the second generation
come to internalize their ethnic self. Ethnic identity, as something not simply inherited,
requires much cultural work efforts from one generation to the next. Many respondents appreciate the foundational role of their parents’, as immigrants, in the retention of their ethnic consciousness. Despite these retention efforts, the second generation still confronts cultural limitations e.g. linguistic fluency. The decline of ethnic raw materials (language, culture), especially from the first to the third generations, leaves a great of responsibility for members of the second generation.

Despite the authentic ethnic identity parents are perceived to possess, the first generation still sought alternative spaces (religious and ethnic institutions) to expose their children to achieve cultural and religious development but their efforts were met with shortcomings. Immigrant parents were not able to replicate their own achieved ethnic identity to their offspring in their host society. Children of immigrants’ integration and horizontal relationships in their host society are highly influential. As the second-generation reflects on their ethnic identity retention (especially having realized its personal importance to them during their late adolescent years), members begin to appreciate the cultural work that it requires on their behalf.

Growing up in the US with immigrant parents, I feel like they tried to put us in different kind of programs to retain our culture. I used to have to go to Arabie [Arabic] school when I was younger. We’d go to Sunday school and learn Arabic, and we learn Arabic songs, and we do Dabka and we eat Arabic food and stuff like that. … that was on and off, sporadic. But, our parents’ generation was like a trial generation, so they kind of assumed you know, ‘oh we’re Arab, our kids will be Arab just like us.’ And then they realized like ‘oh my God’ most of their kids totally lost most of that culture. – Baseema

Many respondent’s conclude that their ethnic identity is not simply primordial, or inherited. As Baseema expresses, children of immigrants are the “make or break it” generation. Since the second generation are born and raised with immigrant parents,
they perceive themselves as actors that may continue or terminate the ties to their collective ethnic identity as Arabs, and as Palestinians.

like my nephews, which is the third-generation, I feel like my sisters were more strategic in like, you know teaching their kids Arabic, or putting them in schools to learn Arabic. They all already been to the Middle East, they’re all under the age of 10, you know… That’s because again, it’s part of their strategic plan to keep that culture alive. We’re the make or break, we decide if that culture wants to be carried on or not.” – Baseem

Cultural work is something that the second generation engages in to maintain traditions and ethnic ties. As Nuha respondent compares her ethnic identity to her parents, she explains:

To them [parents] it’s more natural, it’s not something that they have to try to justify. My mom’s mother tongue is Arabic; she doesn’t have to put herself out there as much as me and my siblings do. She doesn’t have to put herself out to American culture. She has the option not to. She came here when she was eighteen; she did two years of college or so, and then just stuck with her friends, her family. She never threw herself out there. I feel like its more natural for her [mom], whereas for me, not that I have to try to be Arab but it’s something I have to work on. – Nuha

The idea of an authentic ethnic identity is applied to parents, the first generation, as a reference group. As Marco describes, “I mean they’re [parents are] more authentic, they’re more original, you know what I mean. Like the way they grew up, it’s way different than an American grows up.”

Situational “Arab American” Identity: First v. Second Generation

Members of the second generation see their parents solely as “Arab” or “Palestinian,” having a mono-ethnic identity. Children of immigrants generally agree that parents refer to themselves as having a singular ethnic identification. The second generation, on the other hand, use their pan-ethnic identity e.g. “Arab-American,” specifically in comparison to their parents (situational identity). It is questionable whether the second generation uses a pan-ethnic reference “Arab-American” to self-identify in social
settings, however they do express appreciation and acknowledgement of their national identification on paper (Table 1-1).

The fusion of parent’s Arab-ethnic traditions, norms and values is combined with respondents’ American cultural-familiarity to produce the second-generation ethnocultural experience and identification. For instance, Hala claims, “I consider my parents like, fully Palestinian... they're the epitome of Palestinian parents... I’m definitely more westernized than my parents.” This comparison to the first generation, her parents in this case, produce her pan-ethnic identity as Arab-American. However, Hala ranks her identity as Muslim, Palestinian, and then as American. She elaborates on her self-identification in the following passage:

I always say I’m Palestinian... If they're [audience] not familiar with Palestine, I will tell them that you know, I'll ask them if they know where Jerusalem is, and I'll say, you know, 'well Jerusalem is part of Palestine so I’m from that country,' or 'Jesus is born in Bethlehem, and Bethlehem is part of Palestine,' and so I'll try and connect it to them in a way that they'll understand where Palestine is. – Hala

Hala does not stand alone in this situational self-identification pattern. Afaf and Rula have similar experiences. In the two excerpts below, they both refer to themselves as Arab American or Palestinian American in contrast to their parents’ mono-ethnic identity as Palestinian.

Well, we’re Arab American. They [parents] weren’t really American. They grew up in an Arab country. So, kind of everybody dealt with the same thing at their age. There wasn’t much cultural difference to get used to or anything. - Afaf

I think my parents, because they grew up in the Middle East, I think to them they will always be – I don’t think they consider themselves like Arab American or anything like that even though they’ve been here [in U.S.]. Well, my dad has been here since he was eighteen but my mom’s been here for twenty-six, twenty-seven years. She’ll never see herself as an American. Do you know what I mean? She’s through and through Palestinian. You can’t tell her nothing! Whereas me, I’m Palestinian-
American, I have those two identities that I have to kind of play with. Do you know what I mean? With her, she’s like, I’m Palestinian, no apologies, that’s it. – Rula, female

Although Rula refers to her mother as Palestinian, she wavers between a self-reference of Arab American and Palestinian American. In Rula’s case, she believes her Palestinian identity is inherited from her ancestors:

I think there’s always a sense of pride within your ethnicity that gets passed down, from generation to generation. I think that depending on how you’re raised and how your family keeps up with that will help you determine your identity.

Rula generally identifies as Middle Eastern, and may specify Palestinian when she is questioned further. She uses the pan-ethnic label Middle Eastern, as a term that is generalizable to a wider audience. However, she specifies her cultural differences between herself and her American friends: “I have to hold myself differently than my American friends do, because I am Arab, because I am Palestinian.” She makes no particular distinctions between Arab and Palestinian, just as she uses Arab American interchangeably with Palestinian American.

When children of immigrants are asked how they differ from their parents, cultural values and norms are central to the conversation. This distinction is present in the ways in which they self-identify, often referring to themselves by their pan-ethnic identity, Arab-American” or “Jordanian-American,” in comparison to their parents who they perceive as having a mono-ethnic identity e.g. “Arab.” According to (Benet-Martinez et al 2002), the construction of a pan-ethnic identity e.g. Arab-American signifies high bicultural identity integration (BII) or assimilation into one’s host society. However, the self-identification of children of Arab immigrants shifts to a mono-ethnic label e.g. “Palestinian” “Jordanian”, or e.g. “Arab” (parents’ country of origin or ethnic identity)
when they are asked to identify themselves racially or ethnically (not in reference to the first generation). This change indicates a low BII, where respondents “feel Arab in America” which suggests a disconnection in one’s host society and their ethnic culture.

**An Arab American Experience**

I always feel like I’m too Arab for America, but then too American for the Arab world. – Yasmin, 19-years old, Egyptian ancestry

The second generation feel that they are a mix of Arab and American. Baseema, who was born and raised in Chicago, mentioned earlier, says, “I’ve become such a fusion of both [Arab and American] and that’s just how I relate to my everyday experiences.” But, there are spaces where they feel more comfortable expressing their Arab selves. Children of immigrants describe feeling “connected” and “disconnected” from their ethnic selves as a process that is situationally negotiated and dependent on their audience (first generation Arabs, second generation, “Americans,” co-workers, etc).

Interestingly, although members of the second generation recognize that they are a part of both cultures, they do not refer to themselves as American, unless they are using a pan-ethnic identity, which is most often used during their conversation/comparison with their parents or first generation Arabs. In either case, feeling connected or disconnected, involved an audience (family, friends) and a particular space (school, work, mosque). Most Arabs in the community tend to gravitate toward responding with pride, or simply just state their ethnic identity as more broad, “I’m Middle Eastern” to someone who is not Arab. They generally expect more questions from their audience members referring to their ethnic identity, and are ready to respond to these additional questions. However, depending on their audience, and the space in which they occupy at that moment, answers vary. Some reported stating they are from “Chicago” or “the
north side” as a way to challenge their audience, or to reinforce that they in fact belong to the local or national spaces that they occupy. In the following quote, Duha uses Palestinian and Arab interchangeably. When asked if her self-reference changes depending on her context (e.g. Palestinian versus Arab), her response is “no, not really…”

I’d consider myself American because I was born here and everything. But if someone asked me ‘where you from?,’ I’d say Palestine, I’m an Arab. I would never tell, oh ‘I’m Arab American’ or something.

Duha disaggregates her Arab and American identities. She connects with her national identity as American in terms of her host society and place of birth, however, she distinctly perceives herself in ethnic terms, as Palestinian or Arab. Duha was born and raised in Chicago’s northwest suburbs, where she currently resides with her husband. Her parents immigrated to the United States from the West Bank when they were teenagers at around 1970. Duha’s father is an entrepreneur, owning his business as well as having invested in real estate; her mother is a “stay-at-home-mom.” Duha and her parents earned their higher education degrees in the U.S. Although she has visited the West Bank, where she lived for two years, the majority of her entire life was spent in the U.S. She attended school with a diverse population who she considers her close friends (Hispanics, Asians, Iranians, Saudis, Syrians). Other than her brother-in-law, she does not have any friends who are immigrants. However, she has indirectly experienced the political tensions toward Palestinians in the U.S. She explains, during the intifada and 9/11 “[I] was scared to say I’m Palestinian. I don’t know why. I was kinda scared at that time. Everyone would look at me differently, that was a time where you would hear stories on the news where people would be taking off their hijab…”

Duha is aware of the ethno-political tension of Palestinians and their public perceptions
in the U.S. and the distinct political history that is packaged as part of her Palestinian identity.

Although Duha was born and raised in the U.S., she refers to herself as Palestinian or Arab when asked. Duha recently started a career as a nutritionist, where colleagues frequently ask her about her ethnic background. When she respondents “Palestinian” her coworkers probe, “Palestine? What’s that?” which initiates a conversation centered on geography – “…it’s next to Syria, Lebanon…” Duha says, people also respond with “‘you’re from Pakistan?’ or they would think I’m from Palatine [a Chicagoland suburb].” She expects a story to emerge from what appears a rather simple question – “where are you from?” Despite her cultural immersion in the U.S., she states, “I feel like we are Palestinians, we are from another country.” Her sense of belonging to the U.S. fabric is questioned through her self-identification, which has been met with ethno-political questioning and confusion.

In comparison, she describes “Arab” as “the traditional stuff, like the holidays, the way we communicate with each other. You know, we’re pretty loud. So I think that’s such an Arab thing.” Due to these experiences, Duha states that an Arab community makes her feel “naturally connected” to her ethnic identity. She conflates Palestinian with Arab in her description to emphasize the cultural similarities of the panethnic group, Arab, which her American, non-Arab, counterparts do not share. Duha credits the Arab community for their familiarity of Palestine, and their linguistic fluency, something that non-Arab members do not possess, which makes her identity – as a Palestinian, and as an Arab, foreign.

When I’m going to a family gatherings, that’s where I feel my culture and everything. If I go to work, or to school, I feel very disconnected. There’s
no one to talk to, no one that’s Arab to talk with or anything. – Duha, Muslim Palestinian

Like Duha, Nada, Afifeh, and Afaf are all of Palestinian ancestry who were born and raised in the U.S. Nada has lived in Palestine for four years, Afifeh visited a couple times over the summer, and Afaf have never been to Palestine. Nonetheless, they all feel a strong tie to their Arab ethnic identity that they express through their distinct experiences in comparison to their white or non-Arab ethnic friends.

Q: Is there such thing as an Arab American experience?

So the way I’m trying to figure this in my mind is if I’m talking to somebody, you know, who was white, American, grew up in this country. I would be telling them these are the things that they never experienced and never will.- Nada, female

I think the Arab experience in the US is probably different than other ethnicities… it’s sort of like you’re experiencing you’re the other… I live in Chicago, and in Chicago there’s a clear segregation between African Americans, and Caucasian, and Hispanic, Asian, like even the city is segregated. So when you’re Middle Eastern um, you’re sort of in the “other” category… the stereotypes with you are either, like before 9/11 they were extremely unknown. So there was sort of this unknown, you were something that people didn’t really like know. Now, um, the stereotypes of Middle Easterners are a lot more negative… it is not the Caucasian experience. – Afifeh, female

I think I’m most comfortable with other Arab Americans, then I’m probably the most comfortable with my ethnic identity…I think it’s just easier to be around people that are more similar to you, which is not to say that I don’t hang out with people that aren’t, but it’s just, generally its easier. - Afaf

Children of Arab immigrants generally describe feeling connected around Arab co-ethnics, the second generation in particular. They are able to express themselves more comfortably, in comparison to their presence around people who do not belong to their ethnic group, or generation.
Maintaining Ethnic Ties: Cultural Work

Women’s cultural work is symbolic – e.g. wearing hijab, cooking ethnic food, as they actively practice a continuance of cultural traditions.

For my dad, it’s important that his kids speak Arabic, it’s important that his daughters wear the scarf. Those things are important to me as well, but I don’t think they’re as important as they are to my dad. For him, it’s important that we get to know how to cook Arabic food, like, me and my sister… but for me, personally, I can cook but I can only cook American things. My dad’s like ‘no that’s not cultural cooking’…. For him, it’s like he just wants us to live just like they do overseas. – Suha, female

Women play an instrumental role in the intergenerational transmission of ethnic identity traits (Goodenow and Espin 1993). The sociocultural experience, in the family context, is distinct for men and women – with women reproducing cultural experiences and maintaining sociocultural traditions and values. These ethno-cultural expectations are exemplified through women’s appearance, behavior and social practices (Weitz 200; Lee 2005).

When young women are asked what makes their ethnic identity different than that of their parents, some use their mom in specifying these distinctions. Banan explains, “some things that I see normal my mom will not see normal, the people that I talk to differ… I can’t cook like my mom, I can’t cook at all actually.” Additionally, Banan’s mom extends a great deal of kindness using Arab jargon that Banan does not practice; she says she does not know how to. “Allah yehaleek” [may God keep you] “allah yerda allek” [may bless you] “I’m just like ‘thank you!” Although Banan speaks Arabic, the verbiage that her and her mom practice differs in terms of their etiquette.

Respondents describe parents as having ritualistic phrases that express “passionate” meaning toward one another. These linguistic phrases vary for the first and second generation. For instance, when it comes to marriage, a second-generation person may
simply say “congrats” whereas someone from the first generation states, “congrats, we hope you’re next” or something that embellishes the expression.

I feel like Arabs are very formal, in the way they speak to each other. So there’s a word in Arabic um, I would call, I think the best way to translate it is pleasantries [mu’jamalat]. Arabs are really good with pleasantries, just things you’re supposed to say…. – Nada, female

Children of immigrants heavily credit the first generation for preserving Arab history and culture. Hala, a Muslim woman of Palestinian ancestry, recalls how her parents attempted to preserve Palestinian ethno-political history. They would have conversations with her and her siblings about their social and political experiences in Palestine. Her mother and father immigrated to the U.S. in the early 1990s, during the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation known as the First Intifada.

When I was growing up, my parents made sure that I didn’t forget that I was Palestinian because, and it goes back to the Nakba where they said the old will die and the young will forget, and for Palestinians it’s really important that we don’t forget about our culture, about our country, about our heritage… so when I was a kid, when I was like a year or two, my dad mentioned like, the first song I sang was like a Palestine Intifada song… they would play that a lot and stuff. – Hala

Parents who immigrated to the United States actively worked on preserving ties to their homeland. The identity of Palestinians holds a particular political component that reinforces the intergenerational transmission of politics, nationhood, culture, and history. Hala’s family life integrates political consciousness as a method for offspring to maintain their ethno-political identity. Hala’s father is “really involved in Palestine [relations].” He works as an activist for Palestine, so she grew up hearing music related to Palestinian politics and nationalism, even memorizing it in her early childhood years. The parental ethno-political involvement is transferred to Hala as she quotes the words of David Ben-Gurion, the primary founder and the first Prime Minister of Israel. During a speech given
about a year following the establishment of the state of Israel, Ben-Gurion allegedly stated, “the old will die and the young will forget,” referring to the Palestinian refugees. Hala’s story illustrates the magnitude (intended or unintended) of parental political interest and involvement, and how it can shape offspring ethno-political identity.

I think my parents would be more proud to be American than I am. They made themselves more vulnerable than I ever have. They came here [with] financial risks, and he’s [dad] alone, and he built himself up from nothing. He believed that that wouldn’t be possible if he was in Jordan. He was living in the slums of Jordan in the Palestinian refugees… whereas me and my sisters have been going to a great public elementary, junior high, high schools, and we didn’t have to do anything to earn that, whereas my dad did. – Nuha, female

The immigration experience itself is one that sets apart the experiences of the first generation from their children. Some children of immigrants believe that their parents may have a higher level of American pride than themselves, since parents immigrated for opportunity and a better life. Nuha’s father was a refugee who was displaced in Palestine, and later emigrating to the U.S. from Jordan in 1989. After marriage, he headed to the U.S. in search for stability and opportunity for his family.

I feel like because I have to find the balance between both, being Middle Eastern and being American, and living up to both, and kind of dealing with more of the questions and how people ask me how I balance the two. And figuring out how I balance the two is different then my mom’s just like, Arab or whatever. She’s set in that. But with me, I have to do more work. – Rula, female

The identity that one grows up immersed in is one he or she typically does not feel the need to place any emphasis toward (Renn 2000; Ashforth and Mael 1989). Children sometimes feel the need to prove legitimacy of belonging to the group, “Arab”. For example, in the excerpt below, Baseema describes how her parents have consciously worked to assimilate to American norms by changing their names, a cultural marker of desiring integration into their host country. In comparison, Baseema practices culture
work to maintain her ethnic identity as Arab, as opposed to her American identity, to maintain cultural traditions as a Palestinian.

we [second-generation] were more confident in our identity and so I feel like I also wanted to try so hard to preserve my identity that it kind of exaggerated, like romanticized. I tried too hard to keep everything, like learn Arabic and I’m also part of a Dabka team and then I went to the Middle East with one of my parents . . . I try to go, a lot. Even my other friends, the Arab Americans at school, I feel like we try to make hummos or learn these cultural traditions just because it was kind of like we realize we didn’t know where we belong… We didn’t belong fully to the mainstream American society, and then we weren’t the same as our parents generation, so we formed this own experience of doing Dabka, and listening to Weezy [popular hip hop artist] or, you know, it was such a weird experience like doing Dabka to John Legend or the mixture of the two experiences. – Baseema, female

Many respondents engage in the dabka as an embodied expression of their Palestinian collective identity, and as a sociocultural construction of their imagined communities as Palestinians. Dabka has been politically reconfigured and appropriated in Israel/Palestine within the last century (Rowe 2011); however, it remains a powerful expression of Palestinian national identity.

Growing up in an individual, multi-ethnic society, Baseema learns to appreciate her Palestinian identity. As she compares her experiences to that of her parents, she states that she does not care to assimilate or fit into the American standards. As a Palestinian-American, she is able to navigate her social experiences bi-culturally, as a Palestinian and as an American, simultaneously. Baseema, like many children of immigrants, constructs her Palestinian identity through sharing ethnic traditions, such as Dabka. In this case, Baseema communicates her embodiment of Palestinian national identity through traditional dancing with her American national identity through popular American music, such as hip-hop or rhythm and blues. As an alternative way of constructing her identity, Baseema – like many children of immigrants in this study –
fuses her bi-cultural identities by taking an ethnic pluralist approach, not abandoning one for the other (Zhou 1997).

**Linguistic Barriers**

Linguistic fluency, specifically the ability to communicate with first generation Arabs, is identified as a main connection to respondents feeling that they belonged to the Arab ethnic group. Yasmin, who is of Egyptian ancestry, feels disconnected to Arab immigrants by means of language. Her encounters with members of the first generation, including her parents, and with family overseas, are a reminder of her lack of Arabic fluency.

Just because I know people who are from overseas and I know my Arabic’s not that perfect, so they could tell that mine’s not that great or that I’m not from there. It depends on who I’m talking to. There are times I feel connected, times I feel disconnected, depending on who I’m talking to and if I’m speaking in Arabic or English to them. Like my friends [second generation Arabs in the U.S.], we all have broken Arabic, which is – we don’t speak it as well as other people who come from overseas, but we still know what we’re trying to say in Arabic, and we get our point across. We know we’re not that great at Arabic. Whereas, when I’m talking to my parents, they know their Arabic more than I do.

The first generation, as Yasmin states, is a group that sets boundaries on the ethnic “authenticity” of second generation Americans. Linguistic fluency serves as one-condition members of the first generation use to determine (and remind) ethnic membership.

As Afaf expressed earlier, “I’m most comfortable with other Arab Americans.” This point may partly speak to the segregated socialization of first and second-generation youth. Aside from the divergent socialization patterns these two generations, linguistic variation, in terms of fluency, can solidify group social cohesion patterns.
Dialect is another component respondents explore, pertaining to the Levant region. Some members speak madani Arabic, which is considered modern, and associated with persons who live in the “city.” Falahi Arabic, on the other hand, is a dialect that is associated with farmers, or those who live in rural areas, or smaller villages. The social class differences between the two groups are a reflection in how members begin to identify. Persons who live in the city are associated with a modern life, in contrast to the life of a farmer. For the most part, children of Arab immigrants interpret these differences as nuances that may have once mattered to older generations.

Duha explains that living in Palestine for two years, from ages 12-13, has taught her “not only to speak [Arabic] – to learn our [Palestinian] culture.” This experience appears to inform her perspective of intra-group relationships. In the following quote, she describes how linguistic dialect can work as a social condition that impacts intragroup marriage, irrespective of one’s ethnic and religious identity.

Do you feel like it makes a difference if you speak one or the other?

Duha: That is a really good question because that’s what really upsets me with the way they separate. When I was living in Palestine, they would show a big difference between the country and city folk. It’s like my best friend, she was in love with this city boy. They wanted to get married, start a family. It came down to the point where they’re gonna talk to their parents. My friend’s parents did not agree but his parents did agree. And I’m like, I wanted to know why. Why did they disagree? It’s because that they’re not falahi they’re from madani. Aren’t they still Palestinian, aren’t they still Muslim, aren’t they still from our country? But no, it was a big difference. It’s a huge difference. And my husband, he’s madani, he’s a city guy. I’m a country girl. Even though we weren’t even born there, we were born here. But his parents and my parents, that’s pretty much city and country. So… Like if we were living back there, oh boy, I don’t think we’d be married if we lived there. I don’t think so. I have no idea. My parents, I know they’re very chill, they’re not that strict anymore. They don’t mind, if he’s Muslim, that’s the most important thing. I don’t know if it would ever happen. I think there would be a riot, like some public function. I don’t think it would be that easy, as easy if we’d gotten married here.
Yet, among some group members, a degree of significance continues to exist based directly on parental dialect preference and reinforcement.

My mom, I once spoke madani in front of her, she’s like ‘what is that you’re like a dalu3ah [spoiled] you know. Cause you know, is like the country people, and they’re like more reliable and dependent on themselves, I guess that’s where it comes from.

Does it make a difference is you speak falahi or madani?

It’s [falahi] like the cheaper type Arab. Madani is like the higher class. There you go, higher class and lower class.

Most apparent was the pride expressed by women who identify as falahi. Banan explains that she is proud to be a falaha, she defines it as an authentic part of her Palestinian identity.

Falahi is the real asleyah [original]. I feel like city girls are just they’re trying to blend in with everybody else … I have teachers they tell me ‘you know you should learn to speak madani’ I’m like ‘no you should learn to speak falahi’ you know, just like I understand you, you should understand me too. I’m not gonna change the way I talk so I could blend in with everybody, you know what I mean. – Banan

This ethno-linguistic status resonates with Lubna:

[What dialect do you speak?] I’m falahi koo7 baby!

[Do you think that there’s a difference [dialect]?] Oh yeah, you can tell when you’re falahi you scare the madanis more with your Arabic. It’s [falahi] a lot more aggressive.

Lubna continues to share her falahi way of life:

there’s a lot about me that my friends say are falahi, the fact that I can cook a kharoof (lamb), I love to cook, I love to do a lot of things like my mom, my mom she bakes pita bread in the backyard, and so it’s like a lot of things about us my mom tries to keep that culture going you know…
Travel

Before my parents took us to Palestine to live there for two years, I always felt like we didn’t know anything [...] I felt like when they took us back home to live there for two years, I felt like that’s help us tremendously. So much. Not only to speak to – learn our culture..... Even weddings over there, there was this experience in the weddings over there then compared to here. What they would do at funerals or what they would do for like your special occasions like when they have a baby. Not only that, too, we also learn – I had no idea I had like nine cousins from just one aunt. It was a lot to take in, but it was the best experience. – Duha

As with a number of youth, participants in this study identify their late adolescent years, or college years, as a time where they rediscovered their ethnic identity (Shankar 2008; Min and Kim 1999). Travel experiences are part of this informal learning process. Duha, previously introduced, lived in her parents’ hometown, in the West Bank, during her early adolescent years. Her experience living overseas has strengthened her transnational social network, her understanding of cultural and traditional standards, as well as her Arabic fluency.

How did you learn to speak Arabic?

Duha: From living in Palestine for two years. That was the best thing to learn a new language. My parents they got us tutors here, Islamic school here. We knew the alphabets in Arabic, other than that we didn’t know how to speak it or anything like that.

So when do you speak Arabic?

Duha: I definitely speak Arabic to my brother-in-law. He was born in Palestine, I would speak to him in Arabic. My niece, she was pretty much – pretty much my sister and her family, they live in Palestine.

Do you communicate with anyone online in Arabic?

Duha: A few. A few I do.

Who is that?

Duha: From the two years, I have a lot of Arabic friends [in Palestine]. ‘Till today I still talk to them. We’ll talk online sometimes, you know, like in Arabic, but in English letters [transliteration].
The identity socialization from parent to child is facilitated through various institutional affiliations in addition to socio-cultural experiences, such as travel. Like Duha, respondents report traveling to their parent’s country of origin, over summer breaks, every few years, or for consecutive years (one to four). Most participants have at least visited their parents’ country of origin, and typically spend summer breaks (1-3 months) with family. Few participants have not visited at all, or they have lived overseas for 1-4 years. Participants who spent time in their parent’s country of origin had one thing in common: They had family who still lived in these areas, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins. Respondents’ who visit their parents’ country of origin create and maintain personal connections through “transnational social spaces⁴” – transcending a physical definition of space (Faust and Eyup 2005).

Muslim American youth who have lived in Jordan or Palestine, where they are the religious majority, are reported as enriching their “religious growth and understanding” (Cainkar 2014). Yet, traveling to their parents’ country of origin serves a greater purpose. It strengthens transnational social capital (family and friends), as well as access to “ethnic raw materials” that operate as a condition to gaining ethnic “authenticity” to the community. This authenticity contributes to how members of the second generation Arabs construct their ethnic group belonging.

The social ties that develop during transnational visitations typically result in respondents maintaining social contact with friends and family who live overseas. Most respondents keep in touch with family/friends using social media, or phone messenger

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⁴ Faist and Eyup (2005) define transnational social space as “relatively stable and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across the borders of sovereign states.”
applications e.g. whatsapp, Twitter, Facebook that allow for long-distance conversation with co-ethnics.

Do you keep in touch with your grandparents?

Yes, I text my grandmother all the time. She texts me on Whatsapp all the time and it’s like, on and off with Arabic-English. - Salwa

As respondents reveal, these interactions, regardless of frequency, establish social ties and a greater connection to one’s country of origin. These visits serve an important role that go beyond maintaining familial social contact. Participants report that travel increases their linguistic skills, and improves their familiarity with their culture – e.g. food, dress. They also express feeling a sense of belonging while living in the same atmosphere where they feel like the majority, ethnically and religiously.

However, respondents’ are met with encounters that challenge their ethnic belonging transnationally. The first are encounters that remind them of their “American-ness,” (this occurs between first and second generation encounters) and the second involves their travel inconveniences, specifically to Palestine.

Family and friends, first-generation or transnational ethnic counterparts, refer to co-ethnics who were born and raised in the U.S. as belonging American.

every time I've gone to the Middle East I've definitely had that relapse of what reality is, what the Arab culture is overseas. I always get the 'don't yell on the streets' lecture, then the first few weeks I realize I'm not in America, I can’t be obnoxious. I guess what would make it different, is that over here nobody really knows you that well. – Jacob, Palestinian ancestry, has visited Palestine six times, staying for one to three months each time

My cousins and stuff, who lived their entire lives there and all that, and when they come here and all that, they think that we’re American. And then when I say 'no, you know, I would identify myself as Palestinian’ they really feel strongly like ’no, you're not because you kind of just lived here and you were born here, so your nationality is American where it’s not so
much Palestinian, so yeah. – Majda, Palestinian ancestry, has visited Palestine twice and stayed for a few weeks each time

This poses a conflicting scenario for respondents since they are viewed as ethnic in the U.S., and they do not perceive themselves solely as “Americans. Their transnational community, in other words, challenges their ethnic authenticity and membership to the Arab group based the second-generation upbringing in the United States. Despite these encounters, traveling to parents’ country of origin appears to stabilize one’s identity as an Arab, through means of strengthening their linguistic fluency, as well as stabilizing Palestinian ethnic identity in terms of experiencing “the occupation,” Participants articulate feeling connected to co-ethnics by means of traveling to their parents’ country of origin in itself. This transnational experience provides participants with a sense of replenishing their ethnic selves. It produces greater meaning and expression of feeling “connected” and of group belonging.

In this study, more than half of the participants report visiting their parents’ country of origin. In comparison, respondents who have not done so report feeling disconnected in terms of their exposure to ethno-political dynamics in Palestine. Therefore, intra-ethnic interactions, specifically amongst members who are second generation Palestinians in the U.S. threaten the non-traveler’s group membership. Traveling to parents’ homeland, therefore, becomes a key contributor for Palestinian Americans – not only in terms of fulfilling their cultural principles, but also as a condition that second generation group members place upon one another in defining Palestinian ethnic authenticity and group membership.

I know some people go back to Palestine every summer. Or every break they get. Like they have a huge connection to the land, and to the people there. And to the struggle just because they go and see what’s happening.
- Animeh
Associations with one’s ethnic group can root in traveling “back home.” Animeh feels disconnected from her ethnic because she has never visited Palestine, her parent’s country of origin. As she compares herself to her friends, she believes that frequent visitations increase one’s connection to their Palestinian identity, their community, and it increases their political awareness. This boundary setting is confirmed from respondents who have traveled, and/or lived, in Palestine.

What makes someone Palestinian?

It depends like there are some Palestinian Americans who have never been to Palestine so honestly they should be the last people to speak about Palestine since they haven’t actually [been] there…. You could categorize yourself as Palestinian American but not the ways that I categorize myself… I’ve seen it all. - Anas

Anas illustrates ways in which the second-generation Palestinian community attributes particular legitimacy to co-ethnics who experience travel to their parents’ country of origin.

In comparison to the second generation, first-generation immigrants are reported to have a meaningful connection to their homeland. For instance, participation in transnational practices (Fouron and Glick-Schiller 2002) such as maintaining interpersonal social networks in their country of origin is one way that they exemplify this commitment (Espiritu 2003). Nonetheless, members of the second generation can also maintain a sense of “cultural pluralism” (Gordon 1964) in a multi-ethnic society as they continue to hold onto their parents’ traditions (Kim 1996). The motivations behind this desire to preserve ethnic identity and values can surface as members face racism and/or discrimination (Kim 1996). Embracing one’s ethnic identity, then, can work as a coping mechanism (Ngan & Kwok-bun 2012) for dealing with the political and social consciousness of group members (Edmunds & Turner 2002).
The hyphenated identities of “Arab-Americans” illustrate an ethnic origin that is part of the larger society (Isajiw 1999). Researchers have primarily focused on the white, Anglo-European, and non-Hispanic populations (Amato 1996; McLanahan and Bumpass 1988; Amato and Booth 2001). The opportunity to compare the first and second generation provides perspective of their similarities and differences.

Since the majority of participants were recruited from a political event, their commitment levels explained are not representative of the general Palestinian American population, or the average Arab American. Having extended family overseas often motivates travel to parents’ country of origin. Participants who have not traveled to visit their parents’ country of origin express responses ethnic authenticity from their Arab counterparts in the U.S. who have traveled overseas. Group members therefore challenge claiming an ethnic identity of e.g. Palestinian simply as ancestral. However, for those who have visited their parents’ homeland, ethnic legitimacy is also challenged when they are ‘back home’ in their parents’ country of origin. Respondents state that family and friends who live overseas perceive them as “American,” regardless of the level of cultural work that they practice (speak Arabic, cook ethnic food, wear traditional clothing). This produces two important points regarding space. First, the space in which group members were raised determines the ethnic legitimacy that their transnational family and/or friends extend to them. And second, visiting parents’ country of origin provides a sense of ethnic authenticity amongst Arab Americans themselves. Whether youth have or have never visited their parents’ homeland, they still refer to it as ‘back home.’ This reference in itself is indicative of how they perceive this space, although
sometimes imagined, as a place where they state their ancestors originate, but also as
a place where they feel they belong.

**Political Matters**

The identity of being Palestinian, but not so much about Arab, but Palestinian specifically because of the unique situation that Palestine is in, politically, and you know, with Israel, and the occupation. And you know, my parents are from the West Bank and so you know, my parents can tell me about 1967 and the 6-day war. And my grandma can tell me about 1948, and you know, and the Nakba and things like that. So I always identified with the Palestinians. I guess it’s more like the Palestinian struggle and the Palestinian experience being very unique and different. It’s not like just about ‘ihna Arab u khalas’ [we’re Arab and that’s it] it’s like we’re Palestinian and this is what we’ve endured and this is what we’ve gone through and this is what we’re still going through. And then everything else was secondary… culture ’adat’ [customs]… - Nada

Second generation Palestinian Americans, like Nada, who are a part of the
Palestinian Diaspora, adopt a national ethnic consciousness making their experiences
distinct from the general Arab collective. Like Nada, nearly all participants express a
connection to their family’s displacement in Palestine. Their narratives are dominated by
Palestinian exile in a post-1948 catastrophic history, referred to as Al Nakba.

Respondent’s express that they are the inheritors of their ancestors’ victimization, which
shapes their Palestinian identity. The statelessness of their predecessors by the Israeli-
Palestinian conflict, and life under Israeli-occupation shapes their Diasporic
consciousness. The narratives among participants go beyond expressing an Arab
collective self-image; they are distinct to that of a Palestinian identity, in particular.

I feel like as a Palestinian though I’ve understood the struggle of being a Palestinian Muslim, and I’ve also understood the struggle of being an American Muslim, and Palestinian… you don’t catch a break, you know, whether you’re in Filistine [Palestine] you don’t catch a break cause you’re not Israeli and if you’re in America you never catch a break because you’re Arab, and it’s hard. - Lubna
In comparison to the Arab collective, Palestinians statelessness and living under occupation set their identity apart from other Arabs. Palestinian political identity is met with a particular discriminatory treatment (directly, indirectly; perceived, actual) and questions.

What does it mean to feel a connection to your ethnic identity [Palestinian]?

To not divorce yourself from the struggles of your people that live abroad, from the diaspora community. To feel connected to them in terms of their struggle, in terms of their life. So if someone's hurt over there [Palestine], you're hurt here. So, don't divorce yourself geographically, culturally, emotionally. Stay as one group. Once you start thinking in terms of just your American identity, and that's it, you've divorced yourself from your Palestinian identity, essentially. – Jamal, 29-years old, Palestinian-American

Jamal, like many respondents, is a political activist and centers his attention on the Palestinian struggle. During his attendance in Al Nakba commemoration, he agreed to be interviewed for this study. At the commemoration event, Jamal served as a speaker and appeared well acquainted with his surroundings – likely due to his residence in Bridgeview, and his affiliation with The Mosque Foundation. As part of the Palestinian diaspora, Jamal articulates belonging to the diaspora as a conscious choice:

Me being an activist, if you don’t identify with the struggle of the Palestinian people, I think it would be blasphemous to claim that you’re a Palestinian. But, does that deprive you of that right to claim? I would defer to them. Personally, I would not recognize you as such. - Jamal

For the Palestinian diaspora, political activism is a method in which members solidify their membership. Anton, who is an 18-year old recent high school graduate, helps with fundraising for Palestine through an organization for which his mom is affiliated. He identifies as Palestinian, and has visited his parent’s town Ramallah, which is in the West Bank, twice. Anton feels connected to his Palestinian ethnic identity, he expresses “oh definitely! I’m very active within my community.” Anton shares his political views on
social media and states, “it’s in my best intention to let them [Americans] know what’s going on.” He specifically uses his political activism to negotiate his sense of belonging to the Palestinian community. For each of the members in this sample, their Palestinian ancestry motivates their Palestinian “activism.”

In this study, respondents’ ethnic identity as Arabs, and as Palestinians, initiated their political involvement. College organizations, such as Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), provide a platform for members to experience group solidarity based on their ethno-political interest in Palestine. They use their group affiliation to promote awareness of social justice issues that they share with each other and society at large. Arab group members who were not Palestinian were also politically active in organizations that advocate for Palestinian rights; however, the reasons for their involvement is motivated by belonging to the group “Arab” and illustrating solidarity for the collective ethnic group. As an Egyptian-American, Yasmin states, “I have a strong sense of Arab pride. I think a contributing factor that has always made me feel a sense of pride is rallying around Palestinian solidarity activism.”

The political activism of respondents appears emerge through a set of frustrations from their host society.

Would you characterize yourself as American?

I carry an American identity, I’m an American citizen, I was born here, I speak English. This is the place where I’ve learned, I grew up, my consciousness of Palestine happened because I was here. So, I’m indebted to this country. Which is why I use the freedoms that are given to me here responsibly, for the benefit of this country and Palestine. - Jamal

Organizing provides Palestinians with a safe space, where they are able to discuss their frustrations with being a group representative on political, ethnic, and/or religious. As part of an organization, they are able to educate themselves and others about their
ethno-political identity and situation; they are able to organize and play a proactive role in addressing issues that face their ethnic and religious community and themselves.

Although children of immigrants may interpret their ethnic belonging as genealogical, “I am Arab because my parents are Arab” or “it's in my blood”, they do not necessarily see this reproduction ethnic stable boundaries for their children. Respondents interpret their parents’ immigrant status in itself as possessing “ethnic raw material” that they themselves, the second generation, by means of birth and upbringing in the U.S. (where they are a minority), do not possess. Realizing that they deviate from cultural and traditional expectations produces a shift in their narrative pertaining to the level of their cultural work to sustain ethnic authenticity. Since lifestyle and behavior produce unstable boundaries, a great amount of cultural work on their part is necessary should the second generation desire to maintain the ethnic and religious standards of the first generation.

**American Identity**

A clear majority of respondents select American or Arab-American (23/37 or 62%) as one of their top three important identity choices. Although respondents are critical American ideals, this selection process may signify some reconciliation between their ethnic identity as Arab and their American national belonging. In order of importance, however, only two respondents select “American” first, and in these two cases, religion follows the selection process e.g. American Muslim, or is succeeded by their ethnic identification e.g. Arab American or country of origin Palestinian American. The two respondents who select American as their first choice describe it as follows:

I like being American. I think it’s very badass, it's almost like a status symbol. I feel very strong, very proud to be American, you know. It’s a
melting pot, we’re the strongest country in the world, we’re the best military, no one fucks with America! – Samir

Samir deviates from the norms of reference to American identity among respondents. In comparison to the majority of interviewees, he is less engaged with the Arab and Muslim community in general. He describes himself as “very liberal… before I got married, I [would] go out to bars and shit… I was a pothead for a while… and a lot of people I associate with are whites… a couple Hispanic friends…” Additionally, Samir is quite skeptical about sharing his Palestinian identity with others, and does not take part in political activism. These differences, in part, derive from his upbringing. He did not attend religious classes growing up. In comparison, most respondents have attended religious classes, and have built a tightly knit ethnic social network through institutional, and familial, settings. Similarly, Maysa describes herself as “a far liberal” when she describes her American characteristics and she is “extremely proud of that.” Like many respondents' Maysa has always been highly integrated with the Arab and Muslim community. She was enrolled in religious courses as child, where she’s formed close friendships, her place of residence is in Bridgeview, and she takes pride in her political activism with issues pertaining to Palestinian justice, However, her close proximity to the community in general make her extremely critical and disenchanted with Arabs. She says, “If I were to choose just one [identity card] it would be American… [I] Embody being American.” She explains, “I’m the biggest feminist you’ll like ever meet. I don’t think a girl has to be associated with a guy to a.) feel complete b.) to succeed and c.) you don’t need that companionship you have your friends..” The gender double standards within the Arab community, specifically, contribute to prioritizing American identity.
Most respondents do not apply their American national identity as their primary or secondary self-identification choices. Yet, most respondents are born and raised in the U.S., and some have never visited their parent’s country of origin.

Although some can argue that I am, but I’m not American. – Majda, born in US, Palestinian ancestry, has never visited Palestine

I’m not from America. This is what makes America, it’s a bunch of people from all over the world come from all different areas and still can be who they are and live life and get that American dream that they so call, and say exists. I feel like this is important to specify because it still shows the diversity of America and that, you know, there’s more to it. I would never identify myself as full American. Never. – Dalal, born in Amman Jordan and immigrated to the U.S. at age 5, Palestinian-Jordanian, visits Jordan annually

Respondents embrace their ethno-cultural differences from American standards, and articulate their national belonging by applying these differences.

Why did you get rid of American?
I don’t consider myself American.

What reasons prompt you to say that?
I guess what is American? I don’t know… I just don’t think you could be American Palestinian. Like you can’t be American and you can’t be Palestinian. Or like, I don’t know, I don’t think those, in my opinion, and I know people definitely disagree, but everyone’s entitled to their own opinion. I just don’t think those two go together. It’s like you’re either or, you know, pick one. And I pick Palestinian.”

Why are they so opposite? Why can’t you be both?
Um, you can. I just don’t consider myself both. I don’t want to. I feel like, American is… I mean, I live here in America, I just don’t like considering myself American. I just feel like I think we use that as a protector, like ‘oh I’m American Palestinian’ why aren’t you like ‘Palestinian American’? Like, we use that as a border, as a shield, like ‘oh, oh, wait, but I’m American too’ it’s like why can’t you just be Palestinian?

The distancing of many respondents from identifying solely as American may be due to their perception of “American culture” itself as “white” or non-ethnic. Since “white” is
often used interchangeably with “American,” and respondents do not agree to this racial identification, it may be an added component in solidifying their departure from identifying as “white” “white American” or “American.” Another possible explanation for respondent’s opting to identify primarily in religious or ethnic terms, in place of their American national identity, is that American foreign policy is considered anti-Palestinian. Respondents’ interest in political activism to expose Palestinian injustice, which challenges the political position of the United States with Israeli-Palestinian relations, may compete with their national identification as American.

Edward is one of four respondents who selected Arab American as his primary identity choice. In addition to selecting Arab American as his primary choice, he was also the only Muslim respondent to eliminate the religion card altogether. In the following excerpt, he describes how he is considered deviant compared to his family members:

I’m pretty much am the only one who’s going to be Americanized, the rest [parents and siblings] are all the same. Like, all my sisters wear the hijab, they’re all religious, I’m pretty much the only one that’s a rebel.

Edward, who is of Syrian ancestry, is not a practicing Muslim (he does not pray daily or attend mosque). It appears that respondents refer to themselves as Arab American, specifically in cases where they articulate differences in comparison to Arab immigrants, and in situations where they articulate their sense of belonging to American society, or when respondents deviate from traditional expectations. Others eliminate this pan-ethnic identity altogether:

Literally cannot imagine my mouth even considering to say that [Arab American]. I don’t know why. I do consider myself American, because I was born here, but I never said I’m Arab American, or I’m from here or something. I’ve always said I’m Palestinian or I’m Arab. - Duha
Duha positions Arab identity as completely opposite of Americanism based on her ethno-cultural perspective of Arabs in America. She explicitly states, “we’re from another country” despite being born and raised in the Chicagoland area.

In terms of their lifestyle, and acculturation process, respondents recognize themselves as culturally Arab and American – especially in terms of comparing their experiences to that of the first generation.

One of the main things that kinda separates people who are born here from people who immigrate here, whether they’re twenty or something like that. ‘Cuz when they immigrate, they don’t identify as being Arab American, they identify as being Arab. At least from my experience. And from here, if you’re born here, you’re both. You’re Arab and you’re American.

Although only four respondents identify primarily as Arab-American, it remains significant as far as their acculturation process as Arabs living in America. In sum, members identify themselves in terms that supersede both, their race and American nationality. The internalization of the self is constructed into a hierarchy of marginalized and stigmatized identities (Table 1-1)

The ethnic identity construction of Arab American millennials occurs through various social interactions and settings. In this study, respondents express their ethnic identity through associations with co-ethnics. These interactions take place through many events – typically centered on religious or political involvement. These co-ethnic interactions serve many purposes, but primarily provide a space where ethnic cultural practices are shared and expressed by means of integration with ethnic members. As an important contributor to replenishing their ethnic identity, members of the second generation depend on their first generation counterparts for “ethnic cultural supply” (Alba 1990: 21). In comparison Mexican-Americans, who are able to replenish their
ethnic identity by means of continues Mexican immigration to the U.S. (Jimenez 2010), Arab Americans must seek ethnic community spaces, and members e.g. travel to their parents country of origin, to sustain and revive their ethnic identity, and membership. For Arab Americans in the Chicagoland area, resident location impacts one’s access to raw ethnic material, which is explored in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5
LIFE IN AND OUT OF “LITTLE PALESTINE”

The extensive literature on ethnic enclaves in the U.S. has one common theme – this space serves to introduce newcomers to their host country in various ways. An ethnic enclave can be described as an area with a high ethnic population, characteristics, and economic market (Abrahamson 1996), all of which the Bridgeview community includes specifically for the Arab community. As with other ethnic enclaves, the interpersonal connections of members provide social networks that are invaluable, especially for new immigrants in terms of economic opportunity (Massey 1990, 1999).

Previous scholars have focused on the social capital that ethnic enclaves offer immigrant populations, especially in terms of producing economic opportunities (Portes and Wilson 1980; Portes 1995; Massey 1999; Fredriksson 2003). The literature, in other words, have primarily concentrated on the first generation and ways in which an ethnic enclave has served to benefit, or eventually challenge (Sanders and Nee 1987; Edin et al. 2003), immigrant assimilation into the larger host society. However, considerations for the second generation and their relationship to the enclave are underdeveloped.

Part of the identification process among immigrant and host ethnic group members involves immigrant perceptions of their co-ethnic host counterparts. The ethnic identity of a group is, in itself, not a condition of its unification. Intra-group relationships can be impacted by social and economic status, which may create “concrete status divisions” or unite group members. The accessibility of social networks to group members is based on socio-economic characteristics (education, occupation) and ethnic origin (Uriely 1995). Ethnic identity can be developed and transmitted through one’s homeland and their host society (Uriely 1995; Khazzoom 2008 for details of social and economic
status in Israel). Recent immigrants’ may choose to identify with co-ethnics through “proximal host” group, which may be influenced by cultural and religious attributes (Mittelberg and Waters 1992).

The ethnic identity development process varies for children of immigrants who live in and outside Bridgeview. Bridgeview is widely known as a space where there is a strong Arab presence and ethnic market. It is also recognizable to most respondents living outside the enclave (at least the Muslim Arab community in this study; the four Christian respondents referred to the “south side” not Bridgeview in the southwest suburbs).

Lubna, who is of Palestinian ancestry, feels disconnected from the Arab community due to her residential location amongst whites on the northwest side of Chicago.

to me, it’s such a different environment, like, I feel like they’re [Bridgeview] more comfortable in their skin… more of a family than we are here [north side Chicago]… They’re neighbors, they go to the same school… literally grew up with the same people. …it’s just easier being an Arab in the southside than it is in the northside; they don’t see that… they don’t appreciate how much of a struggle it is being Arab I feel, because they’ve always been around Arabs. Their neighbors have always been Arabs, their friends… but for me its like, I’ve always had to put up a fight and a wall and a defense… Living in the Northwest suburbs…we don’t have that much Arabs here, Literally no one…My friends who are living in the southside [Bridgeview], they are surrounded by Arabs all the time. They have Arabic stores, they have Arabic restaurants. My uncle is down there, too, they’re surrounded. Their neighbors are Arab. I feel like when I go in the Southside, I feel like I’m in an Arab country. - Lubna

To analyze the impact an ethnic enclave may have on the ethnic consciousness and replenishment of the second generation, I compare respondent’s narratives that live in and outside of the Bridgeview area. Although there are small niches of Arab neighborhoods in the Chicagoland area, this section is centered on the Bridgeview region and community, in comparison to co-ethnics who live outside of this area. Place of residence appears relevant for further analysis based on two reasons: (1) The density
and presence of immigrants is reported to replenish the ethnic identity of later-
generation co-ethnics, which Jimenez (2010) finds amongst Mexican Americans, and
(2) the presence of co-ethnics can alter one’s impression of the self, as discussed in this chapter.

Eighteen of the thirty-seven respondents lived in or near “Little Palestine,” located in
Chicago’s southwest suburbs. Others lived on the north and northwest side of the city,
or further southwest suburbs, in communities that were described as predominately
white (some diverse) with little to no Arab presence. Residents of both areas expressed
pros and cons that were relative to their residential living space demographics and the
density of Arabs in the area. These narratives serve as a guide to uncover differences,
based on the density of Arab presence, or the perceived presence, in a particular area.
The differences I highlight in this section are not only ethnic, racial, and religious, they
are also region-specific.

How does it feel to be in a highly concentrated Arab area?

I feel a little more at home being around Arabs. As much as I would – as many negative
things that there are, I feel like the positive still outweighs the negatives. Being around people – being a mile away from a store that sells knafeh, or
a restaurant that serves Arabic food. You can dine in an Arab restaurant, talk to Arab people, live two miles away from a mosque. It’s kinda creating
a little area that you can easily relate to. – Jamal

Jamal is a twenty-nine year old Palestinian-American professional, and a life-long
Bridgeview resident. In the excerpt above, he describes his experience in Bridgeview,—
leaning toward a positive experience. Children of immigrants who live in the Bridgeview
community share Jamal narrative; however, important distinctions surface for residents
within the space, and amongst the larger Arab American community in Chicago.

Respondents who predominately live in Chicago’s north and northwest side commonly
describe their lives as distinct from those who live in Bridgeview. These residents describe, Bridgeview as a “bubble,” that reminds them of “back home” which provides them with some comfort. Amineh, a twenty-two year old Palestinian student who lives on the north side describes her visits to Bridgeview as follows:

How does it feel to visit a highly Arab concentrated area?

When I visit Bridgeview I literally feel like I’m in little Palestine…. You can hear the alal [prayer] by the mosque. You feel like you are a part of something. You feel that you are a minority that has a place in America. You drive by and the other Arabs in their cars blasting their music you go to Dunkin’ Donuts and there are Arabs everywhere. - Amineh

Experiences as an Arab in Chicago may also vary by migration. It appears that many Bridgeview residents migrated from Betunia (town in the West Bank) to Chicago. Since Nada’s family is not from Betunia, her social network among Arabs is not as strong even though she lives in the Bridgeview community.

A lot of people from Chicago are from Betunia – small village in the west bank. They only interact with one another. Because our family and our extended family is so small we had to go outside [the family]… we met with other kinds of people and we’re always encouraged to meet other kinds of people. Whereas, a lot of Arabs that I know, who have very big extended families, like their best friend is their cousin. And, they don’t really have friends that aren’t their cousins. And so then they only keep, they keep alive the customs and culture and ways of interacting and social interactions of that group. – Nada, female

Differences among Arab community members continue to surface throughout the dialogue with interviewees. Lubna, a Palestinian nurse lives on the northwest side of Chicago and describes her neighborhood and general surrounding demographics as fairly diverse – Asian, Polish, Hispanics. She even points to “Little Arabia” as a north side area, in addition to Bridgeview that has a high population of Arabs. She specifies that Arabs on the north side are generally “scattered around” in comparison to Bridgeview where they are “all close to each other.” Nada, a Palestinian American
journalist who was raised in the Bridgeview area, explains that despite the village specific differences, Bridgeview remains a space where she feels an ethno-religious sense of community.

How do you feel in a neighborhood that is concentrated w/Arabs?

There are good and bad things about it. I like it for the most part, just because you feel like you’re not as different like, like all the people in this area are familiar with Arabs and you know – hijab[…] no one’s starring at you[…] the other thing is you do feel there’s a bond sometimes, even as different as I might feel from some Arabs growing up, like that also grew up here…. You’re walking down the street by a park… and you see two Arab women jogging, talking… there’s kind of a comfort to that…. - Nada

Suha agrees with Nada’s reaction. She too dresses very modestly (does not wear hijab), which at times may clash with societal standards.

like downtown, where you don’t see as many Arabs or Muslims and you kind of feel like you’re the odd one. Like the other day, me and my friend, the Egyptian, we went to the beach, and literally, we were the only Arabs or even Muslims there. And like, obviously we were swimming, but we didn’t swim in bikinis, everyone’s just staring at us like we look different, you know, and it made us feel a little uncomfortable. – Suha

Not having to be the representative of the group, Arab, to the larger community made a place like Bridgeview a safe haven for members, especially for residents who have become accustomed to an Arab ethnic community. Majda is twenty-two, and has been a Bridgeview resident nearly all her life. For a short period of time, she moved out of state. She explains that her move back to Bridgeview makes her appreciate her ethnic space, in comparison.

How does it feel to visit or live in a highly Arab concentrated Area?

Majda: I do like it […] I moved out to Florida and where it was very isolated, not so much Arab community, so I got to experience a little of both. And after that I realized, not the better area, the one I felt more comfortable with and liked was definitely predominately more Muslim Arab, was Bridgeview.
Majda defines her level of comfort as relative to having an ethno-religious community presence. Majda’s co-ethnic Bridgeview residents agree with her.

How does it feel to live in a highly Arab concentrated area?

Blessed. [laughs] Ok, cause I never realized how much privileges we had…. Like, I go to Middle Eastern restaurants once or twice a week. Or like, I grabbed shawerma yesterday. And then, if I wanted a hijab, I mean, this is from the mall [points at her hijab], but if I wanted a hijab I could just go to a hijab store. And then if I want stuff for my argila [hookah], I just go to the argila store…. I have so much access to everything, because I live in such an Arab populated area. Baseema

Baseema is a twenty-five year old Palestinian who has very few complaints about Bridgeview, where she was born and raised. In her dialogue, she compares her whereabouts with her relatives who live on the west coast in an area where there are little to no Arabs; and ethnic markets are not readily available to them. Relatives who visit these family members bring them frozen items, like pita bread. As someone who was raised having access to an ethnic market and community, Baseema is culture shocked at the lack thereof in other areas.

what kind of stone age do you live in that you don’t have pita bread, fresh on Sundays [laughs] I don’t know, we have access to a lot of things. Even, just food, physical things – like food, clothing, and whatever…. The thobe [Palestinian dress] I went to buy yesterday. I went to three ladies houses and they had thobes for me to buy… that stuff is so easy access. Even like other things, you feel confident when you’re able to relate to people. You see, even, like I said when students see me and I’m Arab and they’re Arab, you feel confident cause you see somebody that looks like you in a position . . . a good position, as opposed to like…. Always bad reflections of yourself. The hospital here… has more probably Arab doctors that non-Arab doctors, so you just have access to everything in this area.

Since Baseema lives in Bridgeview, access to ethnic raw materials, including social networks with Arab co-ethnics is readily available. According to Tatum (1997), these social networks are key and help in the construction of one’s racial or ethnic identity; group members gravitate to one another based on identity traits. Intra-group members
feel supported by one another. Being treated and viewed as the “other” situates respondents in a position that is oppositional to “American.” Since their host society presents such challenges, it is difficult for actors to feel connected to the society in which they were born and raised. This functions as a component that urges individuals to gravitate toward their ethnic community. Tatum explains that this intra-group social cohesion can emerge by discrimination, and racial tensions. Limiting these experiences for group members can lead to living in social isolation. This isolated experience is what respondents’ who lived outside of the Bridgeview community experience.

**Feeling Connected**

The consensus amongst respondents, who themselves are Palestinian-Muslim, is that the space in which they feel most comfortable expressing their ethnic, and ethno-religious, selves is around family and friends who have overlapping identities (ethnic or religious). The overwhelming majority of participants identify their friends as Muslim Arabs, or Muslims in general. Some respondents had Pakistani Muslim friends, or Mexican converts, for example, who they felt a close relationship based on religious commonality. Since religion is identified as a predominant part of respondents’ identity, it tends to operate as vehicle in their everyday lives. Samir is Palestinian Muslim, and describes how culture and religion are relational social characteristics.

> My parents are traditionally Muslim, you know, so even though being Arab and being Muslim are two different things, I kind of group them together a little bit, you know. Like when I think of being Arab I think of Ramadan, I think of going to the Mosque, I think of going on trips to Palestine, I think of hookah, Arabic music, stuff like that, you know. Arabic food, hummus, falafel. –Samir
Participants report religious affiliation as “a lifestyle.” Social functions and cultural traditions (food, music) merge with religious affiliation to form ethnic boundaries.

Yasmin, for instance, feels most comfortable around fellow Muslims. She states:

most of my Pakistani and Indian friends are Muslim, so there’s that common ground and the fact that we go to the same mosque. There’s a lot of the same cultural things, the same style of music, and the hookah, and things like that.

A number of respondents agree that religion maintains their ties to the community.

Thus, the overlap of Islam can transcend that of ethnic identity creating group cohesion amongst the Muslim community.

Do you feel connected to your ethnic identity?
Dunya (male): Yes, over here… 87th and Harlem, they call it mini Palestine…

Disconnected from your ethnic identity?
Dunya: Yes when I go to California… Los Angeles suburbs… you barely see any Arabic people… Though the Arab people that I see are my family… Majority of the population is Hispanic, Mexican… I'm not used to it, because over here I'm used to see Arabic billboards, billboards written in Arabic, stores that are Arabic, over there it's mostly English and Spanish.

It is also in concentrated Arab spaces where Arabic is more often practiced, and the second generation is exposed to members of the first generation. Social standards differentiate between the two generations, with second-generation members perceiving their first generation counterparts as more traditional than themselves. Banan, who lives in Bridgeview has first generation acquaintances or “ma’arif” and explains how interactions between the two generations present a cultural clash:

can’t get along with them too much because they’re still like adat el blad [have homeland customs] and stuff… like ‘eh ab [shame] are you talking to him’ stuff like that… they see everything different, so like everything you do they’re gonna ye alek ala [hang on to] you know; but then later on maybe after a few years they’ll understand it was no big deal… - Banan
For someone like Budur, a Palestinian-Muslim woman who grew up in a diverse community on Chicago’s northwest side, she does not feel social cohesion amongst her Arab co-ethnics in Bridgeview.

When I go to the southside I feel like I’m a stranger and I asked one of my south sider friends the other day . . . She’s more of a north side personality but that’s because she was more in the suburbs [outside of Bridgeview]. I asked her do you see the difference between us [north and south siders] she’s like ‘ya you guys are definitely way more welcoming’… they’re rough on strangers. - Budur

In comparison, respondent’s describe the north side community as more welcoming, especially to new folks. One’s level of connectedness is widely described as cultural, social, political, religious, or regional. Individual experiences can strengthen or weaken these ties. Considering the discrimination against Arab Muslims (Cainkar 2011), participants are able to avoid these social tensions in spaces where they are surrounded with members of their ethnic and religious community congregate. As such, respondents feel most comfortable or connected around family, and friends who share their ethnic or religious identity. As suggested by Kim (1996), the gravitation toward one’s ethnic identity may emerge as a response to perceived group discrimination. This social group cohesion, caused by discrimination do not allow for Arab ethnic identity to stand as an option.

Maysa, a twenty-three year old Palestinian woman, compares her experiences to her brother, an investment banker who identifies as “Muslim-American.” She says he refrains from identifying as Palestinian because of his line of work. Since he is in the public eye, and away from the Arab community, he purposefully distances himself away from his ethnic affiliation. In contrast, Maysa who provides educational lectures and information centered around Palestine expresses more confidence in revealing her
ethnic identity, as Palestinian, than her brother. She explains that this difference is based on their audience and place of work; for her, there is less discrimination than her brother, who works with “Americans” or non-Arabs/non-Palestinians. This scenario resonates with the shift in self-identification as audience-dependent. It also puts into question the social stigma that is perceived as attached to Palestinian identity in comparison to that of Muslim identity. The Arab Muslim community who lived outside of Bridgeview believed they experienced more discrimination in comparison to their south side counterparts, since they were exposed to more racial, ethnic, and religious diversity.

I’ve had several Arab experiences where because I live in a predominately white – I’m sorry, quote unquote “white” Christian area, there’s been a lot for me. Do you know what I mean? But if you go to the Southside of Chicago where there’s a huge Arab community, they wouldn’t really call it an Arab experience. It would just be like a way of life for them. – Rula

Rula describes what its like for her to grow up as an Arab American in a predominately white suburban area, where she believes her minority status as an Muslim Arab exposes her to discrimination. From her viewpoint, Arabs who live in Bridgeview are less likely to have encounter prejudice since they are embedded in an ethnic community. Respondents generally express feeling connected to their ethnic identity through cultural, or ethno-religious involvement, where they can bond with community members.

Public Appearance

The Arab American experience differs depending on their religion and gender. Wearing a hijab is symbolic of Islam, which for Arab women immediately expresses their religious beliefs. Symbolic and behavioral traits are heavily linked with cultural and religious expectations. Afaf explains how this is pans out, in public:
dress[ing] modestly, compared to others. Even if you’re not wearing the scarf, you kinda don’t wanna go out in shorts, you know? You still have to wear your shoulders covered, legs covered, you know? - Afaf

This is something that is specific to Muslim women, where Muslim men, and/or Christian Arabs do not necessarily encounter publically. The religious identity of Muslim women, such as wearing the hijab or the abayeh [Islamic dress] serves as visual markers of adhering to Islamic standards (Sirin and Fine 2007). The public appearance of Muslim women produces an image that holds her accountable for her behavior as she is expected to play the role of representative of upholding traditional and religious standards (Jeldtoft 2011; Sirin and Fine 2007).

It [Arab public experiences] varies also, based on religion. I do think that whether you’re raised as a Muslim Arab or a Christian Arab, you do kind of have a very different experience and a different way of approaching certain things. Me being a hijabi, it’s already known I’m Arab. – Salwa, Palestinian-Muslim woman

Well it depends what kind of Arab you’re talking about though…. I mean, if you’re Christian Arab, you don’t go around wearing a hijab and stuff like that, but Muslims yeah, there’s a big distinction you could tell, for sure. – Marco, Palestinian-Christian male

All Arab American Muslims who did not live in or near Bridgeview were familiar with the community as a highly Arab dense area. These participants acknowledged Bridgeview with a sense of obviousness. In comparison, the four Christian Arabs, who lived on the north/west side, did not. Muslim participants may have lived on the north side, but typically, had social connections to someone (family or friends) in Bridgeview. they’re [Bridgeview] more of a family than we are here. They’re neighbors, they go to the same school… literally grew up with the same people… I have like a huge population where it’s like different [diverse], I’m never with the same person… it’s just easier being an Arab in the southside than it is in the northside, and they don’t see that… they don’t appreciate how much of a struggle it is being Arab I feel, because they’ve always been around Arabs, their neighbors have always been Arabs, their friends… but
for me its like, I’ve always had to put up a fight and a wall and a defense…
- Lubna, Palestinian Muslim, north side resident

Although ethnic enclaves produce cultural comfort, especially for the first generation (Inkpen and Tsang 1992), they are also reported to produce adverse effects (Menjivar 1997). Due to its tight-knit social capital (e.g. social and economic markets), the ethnic enclave is noted to exclude surrounding ethnic groups (Lee 2002). According to respondents, the ethnic enclave creates tension, distrust, and disintegration among co-ethnics that go beyond the first generation and economic conditions.

Lifestyle and presentation appear to vary depending on whether respondents are in an Arab or non-Arab area. For example, Banan states that Arabs are “not ashamed… to be themselves… they could be loud anywhere they want and they don’t care what people think about them.” However, this description changes when asked if the individual is in a highly concentrated Arab area. One’s presentation is modified to fit Arab group expectations when they are placed under surveillance. These expectations do not disappear in a low-concentrated Arab community; they simply change according to the expectations of the other.

My parents raised me to really value people… I hate that. I feel like my parents really value what people say… – Dalal

Dalal was born in Amman Jordan and moved to Bridgeview when she was 5-years old. She grew up in an Arab community by her place of residence. She attended elementary and high school with Arabs, and she continues to attend a predominately Palestinian mosque in the area (The Mosque Foundation). Dalal explains that there are certain things in the culture that she would like to abandon. Social disruption with community members surfaces depending on one’s position to group members. For Dalal, valuing people means that she is not able to value her individuality freely. From
what appears to be a rather stable Arab ethnic community, emerges a sense of social
disruption based on an ethnic value system within the region. Depending on one's
associations with the community, and their proximity to ethnic members (through the
mosque, residential space, or otherwise), the degree of distance from the group itself
may be more or less desired,

A common theme that emerges amongst participants is their ethno-religious level of
comfort as Arab, and as Muslim. Respondents feel most comfortable within the Arab or
Muslim community. Around Arabs, they generally express feeling they could practice
their cultural, ethnic, and religious traditions contentedly. Aside from having an ethnic
market in a place like Bridgeview, a common attraction to the area amongst members of
the Arab American community is that they do not feel like they need to serve as an Arab
group representative to others. However, the tight knit social community can have an
adverse effect for intra-group members, especially young women.

Nuha, who lives outside of the Bridgeview area, in the west suburbs, suggests that
the dynamics in Bridgeview are region-specific and vary by ethno-religious
demographics of the population.

How does it feel to visit these Arab concentrated areas?

It actually makes me very disenchanted with being Arab, especially Bridgeview.
Because all the restaurants I go to there, it's all men who judge girls who
go out together without their fathers. Even if you're with your father, they
judge you. They'll stare you up and down. – Nuha, Palestinian-Muslim

She compares Bridgeview to Dearborn Michigan, which is another highly populated
Arab space.

I've been to Dearborn before, but it's just mostly Lebanese people. I think
Dearborn is awesome. I have a great time there. And its like absolutely no
non-Arabs there, and I love it there. Bridgeview is just a whole different
culture than Dearborn. Dearborn is much more laid back, and I guess
liberal, and you get to go out with your friends and have fun, and immerse with your own culture, where I feel like Bridgeview is more like religiously oriented than it is culturally. It is culturally oriented, but at the same time there is religious barriers inhibiting women from immersing from their culture.

Most members regardless of location, whether in the city or suburbs, enjoy their sense of anonymity and manage it quite well. At times, encountering co-ethnics is perceived as a threat to one’s privacy. In cases where members feel their privacy is threatened, they express purposefully attempting to conceal their ethnic identity. Respondents did this by avoiding an area where Arabs dwell, preventing conversation with co-ethnics, or even masking that they spoke Arabic. These cases most often occurred near Bridgeview, considering the higher ethnic population and businesses, but they were not atypical in other areas.

Most of the respondents that reside outside of the Bridgeview area (predominately north, northwest) describe their neighborhoods as non-Arab (white or diverse), in comparison to Bridgeview residents who are living near or in an Arab ethnic enclave. This distinction in residential space produces more or less social pressures from ethnic group members to conform to traditional or customary standards. Nearly all respondents express that their sense of individualism and privacy was somewhat threatened in an area where there was a high concentration of Arabs. Individualism and privacy was greater when a neighborhood was described as having a low Arab concentration, where social pressure and member surveillance is minimized.

One’s awareness to conform to cultural standards is important for the individuals, especially young women who desire marriage. The consequences of gossip could result in social stigma amongst community members, decreasing the marital eligibility for young women. Moreover, the presentation of self to ethnic group members is a social
characteristic that is extremely troubling for youth. This meant higher policing of their social activities, which often placed limitations on their sense of freedom.

Second-generation group members are quite aware of how to manage their impression of self (Goffman 1959) within the community. Goffman’s dramaturgical framework can be applied to understand the daily lives of group members, which are heavily audience-dependent, or situational, and highly connected to one’s ethnic and religious identity. Afaf, who lives in Bridgeview, believes “image and reputation” are of primary importance to the Arab community. Dalal agrees with Afaf, “I feel like it’s all about impression and how you act, or how you dress.” Rula adds, “its all about marriage, why aren’t you married, or about how you look, a lot of superficial stuff.” Many participants identify their close friends as cousins – which enabled them to have home visitations and decrease the chances of gossip in the community.

Yasmin is a 19-year old college student of Egyptian ancestry. She grew up in a predominately white Chicago suburb outside of the Bridgeview area. Her close friends are Arab American Muslims. She met most during high school, through family friends, and some in college. She spends most of her time with this group of Arab Americans, and is highly involved in political activism, where her recent social networks to Arab Americans have emerged. She is a practicing Muslim, but does not wear hijab. She generally enjoys attending ethno-religious gatherings. Although she lives on campus in the Chicago metropolitan area, Yasmin is selective as to where she socializes and attempts to manage her identity accordingly.

Do you attend hookah lounges?

Yasmin: I don’t really go to hookah bars a lot. But once in a while, we do go to one in Lincoln Park because there’s not a lot of Arabs that go there, so we like it.
Why?

Yasmin: Because I guess there’s a social stigma surrounding women that go to hookah bars […] at Lincoln Park we don’t get the stares… no one is bothering us, we can just hang out. Like, we would never go to Bridgeview or anything. Just the social stigma… Bridgeview is so closely connected, you know everyone. You’re driving down the street, and you look to your left and you know an Arab. A lot of ‘em they’re really nosy and busy bodies […].

Since Yasmin is aware of the cultural expectations of Arabs, she attends spaces that are deemed “inappropriate” in an area where Arab presence is low. She finds herself attempting to strategically conceal her ethnic identity should her anonymity be threatened.

[…] there’s a dukkan [store] by my apartment and it’s owned by a couple Palestinian guys, and it took them a while to realize I was Arab. I was kind of happy with that because I didn’t want them to come off too strong. Now they do. Now they think they have the authority to talk to me, to ask about my life and things like that. And its like, calm down I’m just going to the store to buy a couple things.

When in Bridgeview, she feels that she “definitely” modifies her behavior. Yasmin describes Bridgeview as follows:

[…] it’s not just me, its all my friends, we keep our voices a little more down… we check ourselves[…] If I go to Bridgeview, I dress more modestly. It’s just the way it is […] People are a lot more judgmental. This day and age, for marital purposes, everything always matters on what people think of you. If people don’t think of you well, any guy that’s interested in you, or any guys parents that are interested in you… and his parents ask about you and you don’t have a good rep, then say bye-bye to the situation. And it’s happened with a lot of girls I know. – Yasmin

Randa, who is twenty-four years old, is aware of the tightly knit Arab community in Bridgeview and manages her impression of self accordingly.

Randa: They were having a discussion about marrying someone who is Muslim but a different race for her brother, and her mom was okay with that. On the other hand, when the scenario was posed for her daughter she did not entertain the idea. Her daughter said “that’s a double standard,” and the mom immediately asked if the daughter had someone in mind. The daughter responds by saying, “I wouldn’t bring it up after you like, basically
shut it down.” She continues, “I mean, me personally like I don’t see anything wrong with like if I took someone that wasn’t Palestinian, but I mean to my parents, well, more to my mom, it’s you know, no.”

Can you talk a bit more about what you meant by “more modern” or “more open-minded”?

Randa: Talking to guys, [people] would look at it as if we’re doing something wrong, which you know, if you’re not flirting with the person and your not like going out with the person, I don’t see any wrongdoings. But I mean to Arab parents, that you know, were raised back home it’s like no, that's a, people are gonna talk bad… I mean, I personally don’t care what others say as long as I know I’m not doing wrong, but I feel like my parents are more worried about what others say than like just not caring, and just enjoy themselves.

The perception of the other is very important in the Arab culture, as expressed by respondent Randa, who shares her thoughts on the co-ethnic surveillance within the community. For most young single women in this study, their marital status signifies they are on the marriage-market, where co-ethnic gossip could affect the mate-selection process. To preserve their honor within the community, Arab ethnic standards and values are adopted in the presence of co-ethnics.

Impression Management and Social Class

Do you feel you have to modify your behavior when in a high concentrated Arab area?

Lubna (resident of northside): Of course, you know, you can’t… It’s just different… It’s weird, like, I always feel watched, and you feel like you’re in Palestine for some reason and it's the weirdest thing. I love being Palestinian, but like, there's a certain way you act in Palestine. And, like even my friends, I have, I have a lot of friends in the southside [Bridgeview] and when they come here [north side Chicago] one girl came in [to Chicago’s north side], she came in these sweat pants and like this hoodie, and I’m like ‘dude why, you never dress this way?’ and she’s like "I’m in the ghetto,” I’m like “no you’re not.” She dresses like Bebe and Gucci and all this stuff that they [Bridgeview community] dress, I’m very like, I'm not materialistic at all… the way she modified herself to me I was like ‘dude you are so weird, you’re not in the southside you’re in the north west’ its literally all white here…. “

Do you change your dress if you are somewhere there are a lot of Arabs?
Lubna: If I’m going to a party, it’s different, if I’m going to the masjid [mosque] I wear the abayah [Islamic long sleeve dress], like you know, but my hijab stays on… I feel like everywhere is different… like there [Bridgeview], I feel like I need to dress up more because they’re all in this like rich white girl code thing and I’m just like ‘hey, old navy, kmart’.

The construction of social class amongst Arabs in Chicago is intertwined with one’s impression of self, particularly of the Bridgeview community. As exemplified in the opening quote, Lubna is describing the Arab population in Bridgeview (predominately Palestinian) in terms of member impression management and how it intersects with social class. Impression management includes how members dress, in and out of Bridgeview, or in the presence of their ethnic group (mosque, events).

There appears to be a consensus amongst north side Arabs (or perhaps Arabs who do not live in Bridgeview) that co-ethnics who live in or near Bridgeview are “not the most welcoming.” Budur believes that these regional differences between group members are based on one’s perception of wealth and class. According to her narrative, many Arabs in Bridgeview are wealthy because they own liquor stores.

They are more wealthy… a lot of them for wrong reasons like I don’t know if I should say this here, but a lot of them…. How they originally made their money…. Alcohol stores, stuff like that, so they, they are willing to make money any type of way… but here [north side] they would rather do it like halal way, so they aren’t as wealthy as people there maybe. – Budur

Residents who live outside of Bridgeview, like Budur, impose an image of wealth onto the Bridgeview community. However, these subjective interpretations of social class indicate that non-Bridgeview residents possess an image of Bridgeview that is based on superficial and generalized illustrations of wealth. In comparison to the average American, over half of the residents who live outside of Bridgeview (58%) rank themselves as “above average but not wealthy” whereas Bridgeview residents rank their social class as “not poor but below average.” Certainly, members of the Arab
community in Bridgeview who may own liquor stores are a minority within the larger community. Anton, who was raised in Bridgeview, introduces his take on wealth among Arabs in his general residential area:

Not a lot of Arabic families own those liquor stores and make those hundreds of thousands of dollars… we did not have access to the money, or the perfect education, or the household. - Anton

This is in contrast to Budur, a non-Bridgeview resident, who believes that wealth is one reason that presentation of self within the Arab community is especially valued. In doing so, she articulates “wealth” by merging it with self-image.

So does wealth really divide the two communities [Bridgeview and north/west side Arabs?]

Budur (northwest side): Yeah, when I was 16 for example, I became friends with a group of people from the south side. [they are] more exposed to things at an earlier age… I never thought of putting on a full-faced makeup, for example. I used to just put on like, mascara, concealer and that’s it… I just like had sweatpants on all the time and like a tank top or something. And, over there they’d be…. They would be a little more dressed up. Hair done, and like full make up and um, they know how to interact with each other more…

In a highly dense Arab community, presentation of self is intensified as co-ethnic social capital increases.

I feel like Arabs, how they behave outside the house especially in front of people… Not fake it, but just like…. they want, it’s how they want the others to view them. It’s all about how other families, how other people, how relatives view you. – Majda, Bridgeview resident

In light of this conversation, others respondents express similar ethnocentric attitudes about Arabs in general. As a resident in a majority white community, Rula states that this ethno-centric attitude may be a contributing factor in the impression management for the Arab community.
Most Middle Eastern people that I’ve met and that I’ve seen, they kind of just – they hold themselves in not a higher regard, but they do see themselves as a little elevated than like – the white person. Does that make sense? I think despite – disregarding religion, whether it’s Muslim or Christianity – I feel like Middle Eastern people hold their religion and their culture a little bit closer to them. And they’re a little bit more proud of where they come from. Compared to if you just spoke to a regular – quote, unquote – white person. - Rula

Malakah, a young sales manager who lives in Bridgeview agrees with these sentiments, as she describes the Arab person as:

the one’s that show off, in a way… they wanna be driving the best cars, you know, holding a Prada purse… that’s the stereotypical for an Arab, um, especially now-a-days and in our generation. – Malakah, Bridgeview resident

Intra-group perceptions of non-Bridgeview and Bridgeview residents include different class standards. Respondents who do not live in Bridgeview generally identify Bridgeview as wealthy community based on superficial generalizations, such as how members dress. Other reasons these impressions may be present appears to be due to the high ethnic market which members translate as Arab ownership to wealth in the Bridgeview community.

Bridgeview resident impression management, within an ethno-religious community, involves a class component. Wearing brand names are strategically used to present social status within immigrant communities (Kwak and Sojka 2010). In fact, Kwak and Sojka find that “the stronger an immigrant identifies with his/her ethnic culture, the more likely he/she is to purchase high-priced branded products for status purposes” (371), which can be applied to Bridgeview.

Bridgeview is referred to as “Little Palestine” since it includes characteristics of an ethnic enclave, such as a high ethnic population and economic market (Abrahamson 1996). Ethnic enclaves have high proportion of immigrants, many who dominate the
economic market of that particular area (Portes 1992). In this sample, the Arab American population in Bridgeview and those outside of the area report equal amounts of owner-entrepreneurship professions for fathers – the breadwinner of the household. However, these sample data are not representative of the Bridgeview area itself. The actual figures for wealth within the community are difficult to measure with limited data reporting of persons with Arab ancestry. However, the perceptions of respondents are particularly interesting as they highlight cultural differences based on residential community dynamics that assume class distinctions for members of the Arab American community. Broadly speaking, the sample in this study is middle class (Methods), with actual and perceived regional differences of wealth. Respondents living outside of Bridgeview report more wealth and less poverty persons in the ethnic enclave, and higher levels of income than respondents in Bridgeview. Non-Bridgeview respondents also report higher professional occupations for fathers and mothers, whereas Bridgeview respondents report higher rates of wageworkers for fathers, and report mothers as homemaker. Given this information, we can speculate some class distinctions by region.

Dress is of particular interest for respondents, as they articulate Arabs who live in Bridgeview as more affluent than them. Respondent visual perceptions of the Bridgeview Arab community are based on cultural differences. Arab residents in Bridgeview may be living beyond their means and have reverence of American culture as “vain striving for integration into the culture to which he [they] are alien,” (Bourdieu 1984: 323). As Bourdieu explains, the petit-bourgeoisie take culture seriously, in comparison to the bourgeoisie, who recognize it as part of their habitus. Although some
class distinctions amongst Arabs may exist in and outside of Bridgeview, respondent perceptions of class distinctions of the Arab community in Chicago may be, in part, due to the strategic impression management of the immigrant community.

The social expectations of the first and second generation differ, which shape Arab community dynamics in the Chicagoland area. Social cohesion is not present between members of the first and second generation. This is in large part due to the differences in standards and values between the generations. Second generation members tend to gravitate towards other members of that particular generation. Immigrant standards, which are tied to ethnic raw materials, although valued, are perceived as social burdens for members of the second generation, who are integrated (or wish to integrate) with the social standards of members of their host society. Methods of social integration also appear to differ for the two generations. Immigrants may attempt to embody status through dress and style; in comparison, the second generation integrates into their host society by distancing themselves from traditional cultural standards, which is perceived as deviant. The Bridgeview space is attractive to Arab American millennials in as much as allowing them to connect to co-ethnics in a comfortable space, however, since second generation social standards deviate from immigrants, intra-group social capital creates a dynamic that members stray away from to maintain their anonymity. Due to their appreciation of these generational distinctions, the second generation is cognizant of how intra-group dynamics may influence family relations, which is discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 6
GENERATIONAL VARIATIONS

The immigrant family is confronted with a number of social challenges in the United States. Differences between the host culture and a family’s ethnic culture create a clash of values, norms and customs (Sam, 1992; Velez & Ungemack 1995; Hovey & King, 1996; Padilla & Duran, 1995; Vega et al., 1995; Laosa, 1997; Garcia-Coll, 1997; Rumbaut 1994, 1995, 1997a). The largest intergenerational trends are found between first and second generation, although they are reported to shrink between the second generation and third generation or higher (Pew Research Center 2004).

The shift from familial-based to individualistic-based duties account for changes in value systems\(^1\) over generations (Hareven 1994). Value changes, secularization, anti-authoritarian, liberal views, and individualism all serve as predictors of non-traditional lifestyles in western culture (Lesthaeghe 2010: 228). The relationships of individuals with social forces play a part in shaping beliefs and perceptions of choices presented over time (Blumer 1962). So, while studying an ethnic group in the U.S., (e.g. Filipino-Americans), mindfulness of the groups’ homeland (social, economic, and political relations) enhances the understanding of identity negotiation and group boundary formation (Espiritu 2003).

An immigrant’s country of origin (Dasgupta and Warrier 1996) and family structure serve as determining factors for persistent social patterns (Amato 1996; Amato and Booth 2001; Bumpass et al. 1991; McLanahan 1988; Keith and Finlay 1998). Due to the cultural socialization process of parents to their offspring in their host society, ethnic

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\(^1\) Cultural, economic and policy based influences influence changes in the institution of marriage
identity formation transcends national boundaries. However, the social conditions of the host and home country both play parts in the negotiation of immigrant identity formation (Zhou and Lee 2007; Zhou 1997).

Intergenerational transmission theory\(^2\) can be useful to understand the socialization, behavior and/or patterns, which children replicate from their parents. The theory is used to explain the norms, values, attitudes, behaviors (social, cultural) and relevant familial practices adopted across generations (Feldman and Goldsmith 1986). In addition to the inheritance of status, resources and economic and social capital (Cooksey, Menaghan and Jekielek 1997), intergenerational transmission can be applied to ethnic identity to follow its development and cultural connections, from one generation to next.

Scholars have raised questions about the nature of identity construction and differences between the identity of immigrants and native-born groups (Brodkin 1998; Conzen et al. 1992; Uriely 1995; Espiritu 2003; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000; Sanchez Gibau 2005). The process of identity construction has been focused on members of either the first or second generation of immigrants, with less attention given to intergenerational transmission of identity. Nevertheless, scholars recognize that it is critical to understand the effects that family has on the identity formation of immigrants and their children (Casey and Dustmann 2010). This chapter focuses on the parent-child cultural and social patterns from the first to second generation. In the following section, the context of the family are taken into account to explain ethnic identity developmental patterns of the second generation, and their plans

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\(^2\) This social theory is used to widely in domestic violence and child abuse literature. However, it can be applied to understand the relationship between parents and children to assess social change or behavior patterns based on a wide range of values and attitudes.
of maintaining an ethnic identity for their offspring. The context of the family is taken into account to assess the racial and ethnic assimilation patterns of the second generation, and how parental strategies may change generationally.

**The Family: Intergenerational Transmission**

The family itself can be described as an institution that works as a source of social support and control. Within the family, caregivers direct children’s accommodations such as institutional involvement, and residential ties. Thus, individual acceptance of ethnic identity affects social and cultural parental practices (Davey et. al 2003). The exposure of immigrant families to a multicultural society reinforces the importance to focus on both culture and the family, since the family nested in culture, and the individual in the family (Szapocznik & Kurtines 1993) to understand the intergenerational transmission process.

Scholars have recognized that it is critical to understand the effects the family has on the identity negotiation of immigrants (Casey and Dustmann 2010). It is speculated that children adopt parent’s modeling behaviors (negative and positive) and then develop expectations on relationships in their adult lives (Willoughby et al. 2011). Therefore, ethnic parenting and socialization patterns transfer to children (Chao 1994), and impact child rearing practices from one generation to the next (Cheshire 2001; Lin and Fu 1990; Marshall 1995; Phinney and Chavira 1995; Quintana and Vera 1999; Rosenthal and Feldman 1992).

A number of personal (gender, race, age, or socioeconomic status) and situational (family structure, neighborhood) characteristics support generational connections (Antonucci et al. 2011; Sharkey 2008). For instance, if we take gender into account, daughters are socialized and expected to act in greater accordance to traditional values
in comparison to sons (Dion and Dion 2001). This socialization process produces a responsibility for second-generation women to preserve ethnic traditions and values (Inman 1999) as they present themselves in a way that reflects the integrity of their family and community. These gender roles are closely tied to the rules and values that are deemed appropriate by parents’ culture (Rumbaut 1994; Gibson 1988).

**Parenting Strategies: Ethnic-Religious Retention**

A number of strategies are practiced by first generation Americans to retain their ethnic culture and traditions. Ethnic community involvement is one way to sustain ethnic traditions and values over generations. This includes developing ties to parents’ country of origin, having relations with one’s family and ethnic community, partaking with involvement in cultural celebrations and activities, and “a degree of rejection for perceived Western values” (Inman et al. 2007: 93). A weakening of any one of these relations challenges ethnic identity retention over generations.

Parenting practices, from the first to the second generation are fairly consistent over time (Capaldi et al. 2003; Scaramella and Conger 2003; Thornberry et al. 2003). Parent’s decision to reject their children’s acculturation patterns can result with conflict and destructive behaviors for offspring (dropping out of school, criminal activity, poor self-esteem, depression, suicide) (McDonnell & Hill 1993; Vernez 1996; Rumbaut 1994). Since children’s expressing behaviors are related to parental practices (Gershoff 2002).

**Institutional Affiliations and Social Networks**

Institutional affiliations are an important component in the process of building social networks (Putnam 1995). They create an opportunity to connect individuals who have common interests e.g. religious or otherwise, which may also operate to enrich one’s
ethnic identification. The social networks that youth build through institutions may change their perception and increase their interest in their ethnic identity. In fact, it is due to participants’ ties to religious and academic institutions that led to their recruitment in this study (Methods for further details).

Through primary education, children of immigrants are exposed to and may adopt western ideals (morals, values, beliefs), departing from first generations traditions (Chandrasekere 2008). For instance, the second generation Sri Lankans in Canada “valued being assertive, respected equality, had the capacity to make decision independently, and were future-oriented and professionally inclined” and therefore practice a Canadian way of life (Chandrasekere 2008: 254). This westernization, or boundary shifting, of the second generation is met with resistance by first generation parents (Dugsin 2001). These divergent lifestyles and personal experiences between the first and second generation does not go without repercussions. Intergenerational cultural and social distinctions are met with familial conflict and behavioral problems in children (Schwartz et al. 2005).

Associations of children in social activities are dependent on parental cultural preferences and strength (Haisken-DeNew et al. 1997). Strong cultural retention that interferes with host cultural practices can affect the assimilation patterns of children and are met with long-term consequences (Riphahan 2005; Haisken-DeNew et al. 1997). In comparison, children of immigrants who possess a sense of bi-cultural competence are able to navigate between ethnic/traditional and mainstream spaces (Garcia-Coll & Magnuson 1997). So, although a degree of rejection of western values may weaken
individual ethnic identity retention (Inman et al. 2007), a degree of acceptance of western values may help with integration into one’s social space.

**Communication**

Ethnic identity and communication are interrelated since culture and social context influence one’s upbringing and lifestyle (Jauh 1999; Hertig 2001; Triandis 1995). The collectivist cultures of the first generation are reported as more cooperative and less competitive than those deemed from individualistic cultures (Oetzel 2003; Zhang 2004). Thus, communication patterns are associated with one’s cultural values (Gudykunst 2001; Hiebert 2008), which differ for the first and second generation (Jauh 1999, Kang 2002).

With the first generation, conserving tradition and the second generation influenced by traditional and dominant cultural ideals (Hertig 2001), tensions may arise between parents and their offspring (Park 2004). Cultural modifications are personal and influence the values of one’s identity and their views of society that are constructed from personal experiences (Sam 1992). This cultural gap impedes on the communication that the first generation has with their children (Gudykunst 2001; Zhang 2007). Language preferences add to this intergenerational communication gap due to the frustration of parents speaking their native tongue and their offspring speaking English (Hauh 1999; Hertig 2001).

**Findings and Analysis**

Some Arab immigrant parents make a conscious effort in transmitting ethnic and religious identities to their children (Ajrouch 1997). Cainkar (2005) argues that the religious identity transmission for Arab parents intersects with a global Islamic revival movement and political Muslim. “Arabs in the suburbs claimed that they were socially
and politically excluded, that their children were taught anti-Arab materials in the schools, that they were subject to more frequent police stops than whites, and that their organizations were hounded by federal agents” (Cainkar 2005: 3). The proactive role that parents take appears to be an extension of this revival that their offspring have come to embrace.

I really hope that I can find a balance between being strict and being a pushover… Unless you talk to them [children] at home about who they are, culture-wise, ethnicity-wise, religious-wise, they can fall into the media trap and they can start becoming Americanized and not having an understanding of their religion or their culture. – Rula

Most respondents in this study appear determined to continue their ethnic heritage, and cultural identity. Institutional affiliations and activities, such as enrollment in Saturday school for ethno-religious learning, are an extension and projection of parents shaping the identity of their offspring. Salwa and Bannan, both Muslim of Palestinian ancestry, illustrate their ethnic familial and institutional enrollment:

As a kid, my mom used to speak to me in Arabic so I grew up speaking Arabic until I went to schooling. That was when I learned English. All of my siblings have actually had to go through ESL… I went to Islamic school, we went to Sunday school, that was really important, that they put us in Sunday schooling. – Salwa

We didn't even have like any American TV at home… when we went to American school, we didn't know English…we always stayed in contact with our cousins overseas, or like she would teach us what's ab (shame), mish ab (not shameful) haram (sinful) halal (good; acceptable) you know what I mean. – Bannan

**Speaking Two Different Languages**

They're still Arabic mind-set… edema [old mentality]. That's why I can’t work, that's why I don’t' have internet, that's why I don’t have a phone. But, knowledge, education comes before everything. They said I can't get married until I get my education. So if I get a divorce, I have a degree to go work with. ‘Cuz they’re not gonna support me all my life. – Rawan, 18 year old, Palestinian Muslim woman
Parents’ heightened surveillance prevents their offspring’s integration into American culture. Parents are rather explicit with the behavioral expectations of their children. As a response, children keep quiet about actions that deviate from their parent’s wishes. As Yasmin explains:

for the most part I have the same values as my parents. If I had different values, or if I did different things, I don't tell them. Like, I did have a boyfriend for a very long time, for like a year and a half, but I didn't tell them he was my boyfriend. He was just my friend. And I don't think I would, never. Cause that’s something that you can’t change about them, you know. Like you can’t sculpt your parents, your practicing Muslim, Arab parents and be like ‘hey this is my boyfriend’ you can’t do that. – Yasmin, 19 years old

This concealing of information results with children leading double-lives, as they present themselves as conforming to parents' social and behavioral expectations, while attempting to acculturate themselves with dominant social standards otherwise. For instance, the majority of respondents who have dated\(^3\) did so without their parents’ consent or knowledge. This pattern occurred regardless of the respondent religion, ethnic background, or gender. Afifeh, Burdur, and Duha describe these experiences:

Have you dated someone who is not Arab? Yes

What was your parent’s reaction? I didn’t tell them so I have no idea.

What are reasons that you didn’t tell them?

They just wouldn’t understand. Honestly, unless like I was planning on marrying the person, I don’t particularly want to introduce them to my family.

Why?

My family is not, it’s fairly conservative, and they don’t really like date and things like that. Even, you know, to be dating to begin with and to be dating someone who was not Arab and then on top of that not Muslim, it’s just like, it would’ve been crazy. I was a rebel.

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\(^3\) Dating was loosely defined as having a romantic interest but not necessarily with the intent of marriage.
Like Afifeh, Duha dated a man that was not Arab, however he was Muslim. When asked if her parents knew, she says,

Oh, they didn’t know! Actually, my mom, she found out later on from a letter or something and she flipped out. Oh my god. It was horrible. My dad never knew, my mom, she found out. She was not happy at all. No. He was Muslim, but she was not happy. Not because – I don’t think she knew where he’s from. But, I feel like just because I was dating someone, it was like, what, oh my god – terrible to hear. She went crazy. Oh my god, it was bad. – Duha, female, 29, never married

Budur is a divorced, single mom. Before she got married, she dated a Palestinian Christian man. In the following quote, Budur shares her parent’s response to her dating situation.

The reaction was them not knowing what to do, like, they didn’t know what to do. They tried, they thought it was my friends… they thought my friends influenced me into doing that, it was all me and stuff. So they tried to get rid of my friends, but even when they got rid of my friends, it was still me. So that’s when they were like, okay maybe Palestine is the only way we can get her. But, it was none of that, like, I just wanted to live, I just wanted to have fun. – Budur, female, 22, divorced

In the beginning of her junior year of high school, she traveled to Palestine with her family. She dropped out of high school, and earned her GED at a later time. Although she married a Palestinian Muslim man, she was divorced shortly after. Budur’s is one of two respondents who was divorced in this study. In comparison to the U.S. population, Arab Americans have higher rates of marriage (61% versus 54%), and lower rates of divorce (13% versus 19%) (Census Bureau 2005). However, these figures do not account for women who remain in marriages to prevent divorce stigma (Ayubi 2007), among other reasons.

Divergent perspectives over dating, from the first and second generation, lead to tension between parents and their offspring. Parents attempt to maintain ethno-religious
identities, which impede on communication between parent and child. The ethno-religious identity constructions differ for the first and second generation, which result in different levels of tolerance towards American standards. Due to their higher levels of acculturation, members of the second generation are more likely to approve of dating than their parents.

**Upward Vertical Transmission**

Respondents believe that associations outside that of the Arab community, their horizontal relationships, play a prominent role in parents’ integration and acculturation into American culture. Arab immigrants are introduced to new cultural standards through different methods of socialization, and through associations that are presented by offspring. Parents’ maintain their Arab culture, but as Jacob illustrate:

I feel like they [parents] kind of have distanced themselves from the Arab culture… they’ve become more opened to different cultures and stuff… Just bringing people over… meeting their [children’s friends] parents, and stuff like that…. My parents know of other cultures and stuff, and they have friends outside of the Arab community…

Respondents express that the integration of the first generation into their host society as increasing through associations with persons who may not be in one’s immediate social circle through family members or friends. The integration of parents in American society is often described as occurring through work relationships, or through relationships that were built outside of their ethnic communities. Julie believes its “the neighborhood, who they’ve worked with, just their social circles.” She points to a variety of social factors that contribute to this assimilation process.

Time spent in the U.S., in itself, provides the first generation with confidence to socialize with neighbors. For instance, Banan describes her mom as “more open” and “brave” since she began to interact with more than just other Arab women – “she talks
to neighbors, men and women.” Some parents “don’t really expose themselves… the only exposure they get is how their kids act and how their kids are coming up [growing up] or speaking” (Dalal). This direct contact with children provides parents with a sense of American exposure by proxy, upward vertical transmission. Baseema explains that her parents “took interest in what we [children] took interest in.” Her dad “is a huge Cubs fan,” having an interest in baseball instead of soccer “which is more of an Arab thing.” Her mom takes “fashion advise” from her and her siblings. Of course, this vertical cultural transmission is also relational, where the second generation also adopts ethnic traditions or cultural interests from parents.

Children’s direct contact with American academic and non-academic institutions, and their social networks provide an avenue for themselves and their parents to share American culture. For children of immigrants, growing up American is a part of their daily life. Likewise, so are their ethnic traditions, values, and socializing patterns with parents. An upward generational identity transmission occurs through the socialization of parents with children, where parents are exposed to American cultural standards and norms through direct interactions with their children. Parents acclimate and negotiate what cultural norms they are willing to accept; it is through the interactions with their offspring that the emergence of behavioral or value negotiation is established. Often, respondents state that parents have “not changed, [but] accepted” cultural differences between how they were raised and how their children are being raised. For example, Abir’s sister is going to college in Washington, so she has moved out (at least temporarily) of her parent’s home. Abir states that this is accepted “because it’s our education, but as far as if she wanted to move out on her own to work… that would be
different.” Noteworthy is that this scenario is rare, and the overwhelming majority of youth admit that their parents were not likely to approve of such an experience. Likewise, respondents classify this as a part of their parents fixed value system.

Parents’ acceptance, or tolerance, of American standards is sometimes introduced through cousins, and exposure through surrounding community.

What they see on a day-to-day basis. Not what they see from just us, but from what they see when they go out shopping and at work and stuff like that. So I think – or, they’d let us do things that my cousins wouldn’t get away with. So, at first they’d be like, no, there’s no way you’re gonna do that. We were like, what? But my cousin was able to do this and this and that. They’d be like, okay, fine. – Violet, female

Immersion in American culture occurs with associations through spaces, such as professional social networks. Parents who work, especially in environments where there is a greater non-Arab presence are exposed to a higher socialization outside of their community that influences their perspective. This socialization process is typically seen as a way that parents are introduced to American culture. For the most part respondents deem parents as fairly receptive to new cultural standards because of these interactions.

Second-generation children explain that parents are obligated to familiarize themselves with their host culture in order to understand and communicate with their offspring. Parents’ familiarity and tolerance of American cultural standards work as a necessary component to facilitate the relationship between themselves and their children.

They [parents] have no choice but [to] kind of understand it [American culture] and kind of understand where we’re at, and how that impacts how we act. So they’re forced into understanding it, to be able to communicate with us… – Dalal
Some parents learn to adjust to the expectations of their host society, to some degree, despite their criticism of the social and cultural norms.

Using cross-cultural comparisons, respondents explain how parents’ exposure and perspective to life in the United States have changed. For instance, parents who have visited their country of origin after living in the United States for years began to realize that they value some aspects of American culture, such as their privacy.

In Palestine, it’s very social and people are kind of always around each other, there’s never privacy and things like that. I think that my parents have a lot more respect for that and things like that, because being here. – Budur

Budur expresses how her parents have also changed their views on marriage. She shares how they may have reinforced marrying someone from in the same village years ago, but they have loosened these boundaries. However, after her sister’s divorce, she believes that her parents are now open to their children marrying someone outside their village, or from another Arab country. Budur suggests that her parent's intra-ethnic (Palestinian) and intra-religious (Muslim) standards remain; nevertheless they have widened these options to suitors outside their village indicating some level of progress.

Parents ethnic identity as Arab appear to be more inclusive for suitors within the Arab community, however they continue to prefer someone who is Palestinian based on values that are specific to their village, e.g. Betunia, Palestine. Budur describes Betunia as a village that is highly religious with a tight social network. Her parents’ bias for Budur to marry a Palestinian spouse from the village may be based on their desire for her to continue these conservative ethno-religious standards.

Other respondents make similar statements, regarding their parents’ perceptions on marriage. Young men and women have both feel their parents have become more
accepting of intra-ethnic marriage, typically to someone who is Arab from the Levant.

Above all social traits, religion remains a fixed expectation, as Duha describes:

It’s hard to find a Palestinian boy, which is Muslim, is very hard to find, because we’re not surrounded by them. I feel like they’re [parents] more understanding that they have to be more lenient, let them look for someone who is not only Palestinian – definitely has to be Muslim. Most definitely. But who’s Egyptian, who’s Lebanese, who’s Palestinian but medani, [city dweller] you know? – Duha

Children of immigrants share their observations of factors that they feel have influenced their parents identity as “more American, less Arab.” Due to their surrounding community, the children of immigrants feel that their parents have become more accepting of inter-ethnic marriage as a possibility for their children. The assimilation of parents to American cultural standards are introduced through the socialization of children; however, respondents feel that their parents have increased their tolerance of American culture over time. The longer parents live in the United States, the more they tolerate the norms of their society.

Parents are more strict with their first born, and less likely to adhere to traditional rules for the third or forth born child.

Like my sister said, ‘we hardly went out with our friends,’ now, they let me go out. I work late night shifts, and usually that was a concern, but they have accepted it. That kind of stuff. Me going out, like ‘yaba [father], I’m going to meet my friends,’ my parents weren’t like that with my older siblings, now it’s like adi [normal]. – Dalal

Parents are thought to “become much more lenient” (Afaf, female) to younger children, in general. The eldest children receive more strict rules than younger ones.

I don’t think they were very flexible with my older sister. They wouldn’t let her go to sleepovers, and stuff like that, where they did for me. – Julie, youngest of three sisters
But still, sisters who are in high school, he [dad] is strict, but NOT as strict as he was with her and her older sister. Still, no boys that are friends on facebook (social media). – Budur

The whole thing of like, the way you're supposed to get married and you're not supposed to talk to guys, the guy is supposed to come to see you and all that. I think my dad got to the point where it's like, it's like 'yaba if you're going to talk to a guy at least make sure he's like clean, good family oriented type of guy, educated, and yaba… he didn't wanna say it flat out but like eventually make sure he comes to the door' you know. If he doesn’t, don’t do it, that’s it. And I feel like my mom… my older brothers and sisters experiences it a little bit more of the constrictive, conservative Arab with culture and values, that they even say that it wasn’t like that for them. So that, you know, there wasn’t like, I could never go and tell my mom that, you know, 'yumma I'm talking to this guy' now I feel like my parents, my sisters somewhat put my mom into the scope of – if there is someone involved, she’s not a fan of it she has to ask like 21 questions, she'll annoy the crap out of you though, for sure [mom], when she finds out, but she’s like, we [older sisters] never use to be able to tell that and now that’s possible. – Dalal

However, just because parents have adapted to the culture, it does not mean that they accept it, even for their children:

Have your parents values or views changed because of their interactions with you/your siblings?
“Yeah, definitely, definitely. I think they were more conservative before, but they kind of, first hand, observed me growing up. Especially me, cause I was the oldest one. They got to deal with a lot of shit for the first time with me…. With my brother, the third one [birth order] he had it the easiest… They're definitely more liberal. They know I fuckin drink, it's no surprise. They frown upon it. My moms even offered to give me a ride if I'm out somewhere…. Whereas when I first started going to high school, she'll be like 'you can’t drink, its haram.'… I don’t know, they've definitely, their views have changed a little bit." – Samir

Parents’ expectations of children are altered to reflect some of their surrounding culture. In turn, parents own actions are also transformed.

As a kid, they wanted me to have more Arab friends, even though we weren’t in an Arab community. As I’ve grown, they don’t push it anymore, it’s just habit. Not even habit, it’s just the people you’re with…. At home, my mom doesn’t cook as much Arab food. Speaking Arabic at home, generally we don’t speak with my parents in Arabic. My dad wanted us to as kids, he would force us to. Afaf
Parents become accustomed to American benchmarks and adopt some standards in defining their new norm. Their initial parental decisions are altered and new standards are set. This is not always the case, however.

Would you say that they are less Arab, more American? I don’t think so, I think they’re just adapting. I don’t think it has to do with the ethnicity…. They still don’t like it at all, that I drink… but they got used to it. - Samir

Respondents feel that they have, to some extent, influenced their parents’ tolerance of American culture. Children do not take full responsibility of their parents’ acculturation process. They are aware of additional factors that have played a part in this progression (e.g. watching American television, listening to the radio, working with Americans), that they express contributing to the process, over time.

I wore earrings… they didn’t like it before but then they got used to it….. not less Arab, but it makes you build your American culture, you know. Watching American music, watching American tv, you see how they cook, you see how their shows are, you see how they identify themselves, you see a bunch of stuff, so you adapt to culture. – Marco

Respondents perceptions of their parents is primarily and predominately as Arabs, as a fixed, genealogical status. Yet, they are able to articulate ways in which their parents assimilate to American culture. Generally, Arab is depicted as a more static characteristic, especially for parents, whereas American appears flexible. Although American values can be tolerated, they are not seen as replacing parents’ Arab, or more traditional or conservative values.

More American, not less Arab . . . [they’re] more accepting with what the norm is, but it doesn’t change being Arab….. Just because they accepted these norms it’s not going to change their own values of being Arab. So they have changed views, not their values. – Abir

Respondents depict American culture as changing some of their parents’ behavior and views, “they are more open-minded.” Nonetheless, parents are not seen as
changing their Arab values, which appears to be a primordial, or inherent, characteristic of their social and ancestral makeup.

being in the culture – the friends that they’ve… They’ve had to work at jobs where there’s not a lot of Arabs there… So, I think there’s times where they’re still very Middle Eastern, still very Jordanian, but I think… I think they have open minds. They’re a bit more open. – Julie

I feel like they kind of have distanced themselves from the Arab culture, but at the same time, kept those ties to a certain extent as well. They’ve become more opened to different cultures and stuff. – Jacob

Najwa’s parents attended school in the U.S., worked with non-Muslims, and non-Arabs. She believes that these experiences, along with their direct interaction with her, have changed their views.

I guess ‘cause they went to school here, so they were educated here, they interacted with the people, there’s a lot of other people I know, their parents never went to school, they barely spoke English so they were very, still like, home. Like my parents were very religious and Arab and all that, but they knew how to interact with us and our siblings, I guess, because they’ve been put in the environment. So they weren’t overly strict on some things, they weren’t like too lenient on others… – Najwa

Najwa suggests that her parent’s educational experiences in the U.S. may have increased their American cultural tolerance and acquaintances with their host society members. Morals and values, especially those that are linked with religious standards and expectations are not flexible, although some cultural values may be tolerated.

**Changing Political Perspective**

Parents’ country of origin shapes the lives of their offspring, which also influence their political involvement. In some parent-child relationships, political consciousness of parents is reintroduced by offspring who are politically active themselves. This produces an upward vertical transmission from offspring to their parents. Jacob, a Christian-Palestinian, is a political activist supporting Palestinian human rights through his
university affiliation with Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). He states that his parents have attempted at “distancing that political and historical aspect of what it means to be Palestinian” where he’s “kind of pushed it on to them.” Jacob describes his parents the same way he does a number of other community members. He explains, “they would say that they’re ‘Palestinian’…. But when it came to discussing politics and stuff, that’s something that they distance themselves from drastically.”

...I guess in regards to work on the occupation of Palestine and stuff, my family's always been like, 'well nothings gonna happen, it’s been 65 years, like 'you're working for no reason' and stuff and I look at 'em and I'm just like 'no you can't give up hope.' And they'll just be like, 'hope died out like 65 years ago or something like that' it’s just that, the way people look at life, is different.” – Jacob

Jacob vividly recalls the moment his mom shared the Nakba story with him, “it was May 19th of this year [2014]” where she said “you know, it's a lot better that Palestinians are doing something about this” – for him this exchange was “surprising” and represented a symbolic moment where he felt his role and message, as an activist, was engaged and valued by his mother. Jacob’s grandparents were displaced from Jerusalem in 1948; his parents grew up in the West Bank and immigrated to the U.S. in 1989, during the First Intifada. The story Jacob’s mother shared with him involved the history of Palestinian people and a direct family history. His mom has adapted to his involvement in politics, but his father “doesn’t talk about it.” The horizontal relationships that Jacob has established through his peers, in this case, results in resurfacing a political memory from his mother.

Baseema, a Muslim-Palestinian who is also a political activist feels similarly. Her parents allow her to travel and explore. Her father converses with her “about politics and even though they’re Palestinian,” she states, “my mom doesn’t know the details of the
Nakba, or like the Naksa, or these things. So she’ll ask me a lot of those questions because I’ve read the books and stuff.” Both Baseema’s parents were born and raised in the West Bank, and immigrated to the United States at around 1980, before these historical events took place. Youth such as Jacob and Baseema view their parents as more complicit as far as their actions with the Palestinian struggle and the occupation. In comparison, they serve as informants for their parents as they spark political discussions with them.

Animeh is a political activist who is passionate about the Palestinian cause. She explains that she can articulate the occupation and its history better than her mother, who “does not read what’s going on.” She states, “SJP taught me how to educate others about it. To be vocal about it, go to protests, go to conferences, speak somewhere. That is a lot stronger than my parents.” Animeh shares some information with her parents, but they do not understand specifics like “Depaul divest,” a campaign organized by SJP students for DePaul University to boycott corporations that profit from Israel’s occupation of Palestine.

Some parents have passive political attitudes. They believe Palestine will be free one day, but they are not politically active themselves. Children of immigrants in this study often describe their parents as apathetic toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Animeh quotes her mom saying “what's the point what are we going to do,” and Animeh disagrees with this position. In that sense, Animeh’s political ethnic identity is active, and stronger than that of her parents.
Other respondents credit their political activism to their parents, who were highly politically active and introduced them to transnational issues, especially that pertaining to Palestine.

I led my first protest, I was 4-years old and it was during the second intifada. Honestly, I’ve been paying attention for as long as I can remember, especially I used to live with my grandparents when I was younger. Like all the would do is watch Al-Jazeera all day. So I would sit with them and I would be really affected by what I was seeing… I remember my dad took me to my first protest when I was 4 or 5, and I led it, I led one chant…. But didn’t really get active active… until I was a freshman in high school, till I was 14. – Nuha, Palestinian ancestry

While first generation Palestinians quickly adapt to American society, they are politically conscious and involved with issues of their homeland “to an unusual degree among immigrant communities” (Christison 1989: 18). This trend trickles down to American born Palestinians, who possess ethno-political consciousness. As exemplified in this study, second generation Palestinian college students continue their political activism and raise awareness of the Israel occupation of Palestine through campus organizations, such as Students for Justice in Palestine. It is through this activism that offspring are able to continue or reintroduce their parents to the current political climate pertaining to the Palestinian struggle.

**Second Generation Parenting Strategies**

Psychosocial influences of parenting can influence the childrearing attitudes and practices from one generation to another (Feldman and Goldsmith 1986); however, these intergenerational patterns can be altered through changes in one’s social context (Quinton and Rutter 1984). Children of Arab immigrants offer an example of these circumstantial variations in parenting styles and attitudes.
Budur expresses, “… they [parents] just knew they wanted to raise us pretty much the way they were raised.” The transition into a multi-cultural environment for the first-generation is met with resistance for their children to assimilate, whereas children, the second generation, generally embrace their surroundings and are more accepting of it.

Second generation Arabs feel as though their understanding of American culture will create a different parent-child relationship between themselves and their offspring. As a result, respondents expect more communication between themselves and their children – the third generation. This pattern suggests a greater degree of integration and American social life for the third generation and beyond.

I feel like my kids would probably be um, even more Americanized to tell you the truth….I think with my parents they didn’t know the [American] culture so we were probably a little more, slicker we could kind of like lie and do whatever we wanted to do… I think with my kids I’m gonna know a little better because I was raised here. Um, but on the flip side, I’m probably gonna be more lenient with things, like if they wanna go to like a concert or something, or go overnight to their friends, I’m probably gonna be more likely to let them than say my parents would’ve let me. – Afifah, female

Assimilation into American culture comes with a weakening in ethnic culture, including one’s native tongue. The Arabic fluency of the second generation is decreasing, and respondents share that they primarily speak English with family and friends, and practice Arabic on occasion (special events, holidays, and when reading the Quran).

I don't know if I could speak Arabic to them in the house. It's something I'm going to try because I don't want to lose the language. Even with us I feel like it's half lost you know. Even though parents did everything they can with making us go to school Sunday school and stuff like that. We're going to come out talking English more and I just feel like I wanted definitely keep the Arab language alive. Just in terms of religion and stuff I want to raise my kids growing up in the mosque. I grew up in the mosque when I was older like and of high school/college. I feel like that's where you get a lot of friendships and bonds, when you are really young. – Amineh
For many members in this sample, Arabic conversations develop with grandparents, someone elderly (first generation), or with family and friends who were recent immigrants. With many grandparents living overseas or deceased, and considering the social disengagement between the first and second generation (also in chapter 5), these opportunities were scarce. Members of the second-generation seldom interact with first generation persons due to assimilation differences, limits their practical use of Arabic.

**Shrinking the Parent-Child Communication Gap**

My dad was always working… he was still my father but I don’t feel like we ever, any of us, even my brothers, had a bond or that relationship with him. You know, it was a typical Arab. Like, I work, I bring in the income, I come home, like the house should be clean, you know, the kids should be sleeping or whatever. No noise. So I mean, hamdallah [thank God], my dad was always good to us, it’s just we really didn’t see him, and he never really like, interacted with us. – Randa

Due to their familiarity of American culture, the communication gap between the first and second generation may shrink between the second generation and their offspring. Children of immigrants desire greater interaction with their children, which is something they have adopted through their horizontal social influences during their upbringing.

by American standards my parents are strict. You know? I still had a curfew until…I still technically have a curfew. But until I was like a freshman in college I had a curfew. Most of my friends stopped having curfews freshman, sophomore year of high school. But, at the same time, my parents would let me go out with my friends and hang out. My cousins and stuff weren’t really – unless it was family, or the friends came in their house – they weren’t allowed to really go out and hang out or go to the movies with their American friends, or anything like that. – Rula, twenty-five year old Palestinian Muslim woman

Rula states that she wants her children to “be able to come to me and speak… you know, whatever issue their going through, and not feel like oh, they’re gonna get in
trouble for it.” Listening to children, and engaging in dialogue with them is something that echoes with many respondents.

my mom, she reacts very fast, she won’t give us the chance to say anything. She’ll scream and everything. I think I will listen to my child. You know, give them a chance to explain, listen to them, I want them to come to me like a friend. Like, I don’t want to be this mean person where they won’t come to me. I want to be there for them, I want them to come to me when they are troubled, I want them to come to me when they’re sad, anything. I want them to come to me. – Duha

Although Duha’s relationship with her mom got stronger over the years, she wishes things could have been different during her upbringing. Her parent’s rules were nonnegotiable.

Unlike many respondents in this study, the first generation adopts an authoritarian parenting style defined as an attempt to “shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct” (Baumrind 1966: 890). In place of this style, members of the second generation wish to implement an authoritative parenting style, where they “direct the child’s activities in a rational, issue-oriented manner” (Baumrind 1966: 891) which increases levels of communication between parent-child. Baumrind (1966) explains that this “encourages verbal give and take” (891) independence, and produces less delinquency, and healthier psychological outcomes for children in Western societies. This parenting style promotes communication between parents and children, which is an important component of parenting for children of immigrants. These parenting styles are, in part, due to higher levels of education (Kelley et al. 1992) possessed by the second generation, in comparison to their parents. Duha, for one, feels that this would help her form a stronger bond with her children than she experienced with her parents.
My sister who’s twenty-six [and] still living at home, they don’t care about age, they don’t care how old you are or anything. You’re living under our roof, you come home at nine p.m. No complaints… I feel like now, once I have kids, I’m gonna give them more space, for them to come to me when [they’re] troubled. My mom, when she gets pissed she gets loud. It’s scary to go to her when we need her. – Duha

The redefining of second generation social boundaries, based on patterns of assimilation that strays away from that of the first generation, a communication gap emerges between the two generations. The degree of socio-cultural variation between parent-child may increase or decrease this gap, within the family context. However, the communication gap goes beyond the family setting. It reproduces itself in public settings, and is highly visible in spaces that constitute a high concentration Arab ethnic presence, or spaces with a high population of Arab immigrants. The consequences of the communication gap divide the Arab populace. It creates tension between the first and second generation, and the parent-child relationship, which lessens socio-cultural and ethnic retention as the second generation distances itself from their co-ethnic counterparts.

**Education: Formal and Informal**

The second generation is submerged in a multi-ethnic upbringing, and possesses awareness of people and the social struggle of other groups (Davis 2016). They have an interest for their children to be even more engaged, and continue the social and political consciousness that they have demonstrated. Maysa illustrates:

> I want my kids to have a strong grasp about the world around them…. Let your kids be involved in other peoples struggles, you know like stand up for other peoples rights so that’s something that I’m really passionate about.

In addition to greater levels of independence, the second generation wishes for their children to have more racial and ethnic intergroup interactions and relationships. The
second generation often describes their upbringing as “sheltered.” Rubaa, Hiba and Nada all dislike the idea of limiting the independence of children.

My mom would shelter me and my siblings, and then she realized like you know, that's why I didn't have a lot of opportunities growing up is cause I was sheltered. So then I told, you know, I would talk to her, I'm like 'mom this why you didn't have an opportunity' and then she realizes why it's important for a woman to go out there, especially after her divorce. Rubaa

I do wanna raise them going to school, Arab school and Islamic school. Um, but I want their values to be different. I wanna raise my kids not sheltered. I feel like my parents kind of did that to us, it's like only think Arab, only breath Arab, believe Arab, and I don't want that. I want my children to be exposed to other cultures and religions. – Hibah

I would encourage my kids to make friends… I would make sure that we go places where there are a lot of kids from different backgrounds to make sure that they really learn not to live in some weird, Arab-centric world. – Nada

The second generation hopes to implement different educational experiences for their children. This includes offering a “more gentle” approach through methods of communication, promoting awareness of gender roles and equality, and offering greater autonomy (e.g. allowing them to study abroad, join campus organization and sports) than they have experienced themselves. Hibah explains how she plans to push gender boundaries by modeling the dual role of parent and professional.

kind of showing them [children] that you know, you can, I can go to school, I can do all of this, this is more important, education is more important, having a career is more important. They've kind of changed their values a little, so now they're influencing my sisters to step up and college is first, career is first, you know, family obviously is always there but you always have to do that. Hibah

Honestly, the one thing I would say I would do differently is get my kids more involved in school. I didn’t start playing sports until fifth and sixth grade, that’s when my parents were like, okay, fine. And that’s because I was like, okay, I’m going to law school. I’m gonna need some scholarships, I’m gonna need, you know, this. Join clubs and stuff like that. My parents were not very big fans of that. But, yeah, no, I actually encourage stuff like that. – Violet
Maybe I would be – I would focus more on my kids’ education within the system more. I would try to debrief them or go over what they went over, just to see if they’re being educated in the way that I believe is proper. So I will be more in tune with their educational needs. That’s one difference. But in terms of love, I don’t think I’ll ever be able to top my mom on that. – Jamal

As a result of understanding American cultural standards, the second generation plans to cultivate an educational experience that is more nurturing for their children than they were allowed by their first-generation parents.

Since many youth are not able to have open-communication with their parents, considering the clash of perspectives and norms, they desire that as something they may have with their children. Often, they express that the strict parenting they experienced hindered them from taking part in opportunities, like studying abroad. Amineh believes her parents were “really Arab” and that was the reason they did not allow for her to travel for her education. She says her parents thought she would “turn bad” but she believes it would have been a “great experience.”

Why can't I move out? Why can't I live in an apartment for like six months or whatever in school? Or why can I study abroad for a week or go visit my friends in California or like I don't know go to London for a month? You know stuff like that. I just feel like traveling is such a huge part of like American culture in a way." This is the time where I should be traveling I should be doing what I want. I feel that wasn't fair and I'm going to let my kids do that. – Amineh, female

This disconnect between the first generation and their offspring results with greater understanding and leniency between second and third generations. However, it this pattern can also creates a greater ethnic divide between the first and third generation.

I think I would allow my children a little bit more freedom. Do you know what I mean? Like, for me, going to school wasn’t an option. You have to go to school. You don’t have the option of not going to school. And I think for my children I would stress the importance of education and how in my opinion, they should get educated, but I wouldn’t be like – ‘cuz you know, some people aren’t cut out for school. Some people can start their own
business and be fine. If you can do that, go ahead. Type of thing. I feel like, I wouldn’t totally, if someone I knew came, if I had a daughter or whatever, and she was like twenty-two, and she was in love with this guy and he loved her too and I felt like they were a good match, I wouldn’t be like, okay you have to finish school before anything can happen. I don’t know, I’m a romantic. If that’s your soulmate, if that’s who you love, go ahead type of thing. I would have a little bit more leniency when it came to that. – Rula, female

Respondents, especially young men, appear to gravitate for more social leniency for boys, but not girls. Some of the potential parenting practices they express continue to reproduce gender inequalities, to some degree. These gender roles are common for traditional families (Slavkin and Stright 2000), where the father is the breadwinner and the mother is the homemaker (Eagly and Steffen 1984). The burden of women to embody ethno-cultural and religious practices may increase the fear of their assimilation to American standards, which could eradicate traditional values.

The overwhelming amount of participants in this study lived in a traditional family, where mothers were described as “hommakers.” Young women express that, although their mothers put their family first, they would value family, but they would also prioritize having a career and other social roles. Hibah says,

I can get a job, I can do what I want, I can go to the gym, have dinner with friends…. Growing up, a main priority for a woman is her family so she could not do anything because she had to tend to her family. I believe you can still do that, but still do everything else.

For Hibah, and many other young women, the cultural standards that were set for them were centered on fulfilling a maternal role and duties. Young women express pushing the boundaries of gender roles and expectations by redefining them, which deviates from traditional the cultural standards, in which they were raised.

Children of immigrants, for the most part, do not agree with sex segregation, for them, hanging out with the opposite sex is “adi” or normal.
Like going out with guy friends, you know. I mean, if I'm not doing anything I find that to be adi [normal] you know. So, but, she [mom] wouldn’t especially because like Arabs talk…. With my dad, oh my God, everything, everything is just old fashioned, it’s just like I can’t, I can’t, it’s just too much! – Layal, female

The inability to discuss these scenarios with parents, who appear nonnegotiable, produces censorship in the parent-child relationship. Due to their different views on social activities and behavior between the sexes, (and their reaction) Hala, for instance, censors what she shares with her parents. She explains that her views on school are different than people she was acquainted with, who married at 18 years of age or in their early twenties. She states, “when I chose college over getting married, it was a surprise, but at the same time they [parents] weren’t demeaning, or say its bad…” Her parents were really supportive of that, which she says was “sort of a surprise.”

I wanna be a working mom, and I don’t wanna have more than hopefully 2 kids… I wish to put my kids in a daycare for as long as I can, or school. What other people would think, like my mom or aunts or family, is when it is time to have kids you need to be a mom and raise the kids, and then after they are out in school, you can go out and work. Um, I don’t believe in that, I think that you, if you wanna do things on your own, you should go ahead and do that. – Hibah, female

Associations between the children of immigrants differ from the first generation. For instance, second generation respondents appeared to have greater diversity within their circle of friends than their parents. This diversity included persons of a different race, ethnicity, sex, sexuality, etc. In fact, second generation respondents noted this generational difference as a characteristic that made them more “open-minded” in comparison to their parents, and members of the first generation altogether. Signs of diversion among first and second-generation millennials are based on adaptation of western culture, which position first generation millennials as “acquaintances.” This
unbiased position of respondents was solely based on friendship associations of westernized persons.

Do you have friends who were born and raised in the Middle East?

I usually don’t get along with people who were born and raised in the Middle East… we just can’t be close. Like, I think it’s, its just the language barrier a lot of times. Um, it’s a lot about like how we view the world, it’s about the fact that usually they do have a lot of generalizations about what it means to be, you know, white or American … they just don’t see things the same way. They accept certain cultural norms in the Arab culture that I reject. Like, no it’s not okay just because he’s a boy. Like, Islamicly, it is wrong. To me, that’s like my number one thing. [dating]… social expectations as an American are different than social expectations as an Arab… and the values are different… they get mad when I say I’m American… there’s an inferiority complex. – Nada, female

Second generation Arabs Muslims are also accepting of interethnic and interracial marriage prospects, but interfaith marriages stand as an obstacle. In this case, the role of women plays an instrumental part in the generational transmission of religious beliefs (Sayeed 2013). Faith is described as “a lifestyle” and is taken into greater consideration in terms of marriage.

Nada, a thirty-three years old Muslim woman, explains that her parents may feel like “they don’t have an option” since they were not raised in a multiracial, multiethnic society. She does not have a sense of guilt if she deviates from Arab customs, because she feels that she has cultural options.

Well, I guess I feel like I have options to pick and choose what I want and what I like about being Arab and implement those into my life… I think my parents and a lot of parents who now have kids that were born and raised in the U.S. are starting to finally get that their kids are American… –Nada, female

Parent’s opinion matter, and they affect the choices of offspring decisions, despite the offspring’s disagreement with parents’ views and values.
They’re a lot more religious than I am. They’re a different generation, they are just old school. The culture they have is different. Like when you asked me if I would marry a girl that was Muslim or wears a hijab I said that doesn’t matter to me. But they would want me to marry someone like that. They follow the religion more than me. – Edward, male, 30-years old

Generally speaking, members of the second generation wish to increase inter- and intra-group communication and understanding. Their primary concerns lie in shrinking the existing generational communication gaps. Second generation Arabs Muslims are also accepting of interethnic and interracial marriage prospects, but interfaith marriages stand as an obstacle. In this case, the role of women plays an instrumental part in the generational transmission of religious beliefs (Sayeed 2013). Faith is described as “a lifestyle” and is taken into greater consideration in terms of marriage.

Gendered Traditions

That [sexism] is totally against Islam… I felt like there’s a lot of things I still don’t like about the culture… I’m gonna change that. – Farhah, female

Farhah shares her dislikes of “the Arab culture and how some people act,” are centered on sexism. She recalls gender inequality in Arab culture by providing details about her girlfriends who have to abide by a curfew yet have younger brothers have autonomy over their whereabouts. For women, Farhah explains, Arab families reinforce to “doboohum bil beit” meaning “hide your daughters at home.” As a method of social control over women, “haram” and “eib” are fused together, which blur the lines between ethno-cultural and religious beliefs. As a young Arab woman, Farhah would like to make distinct cultural expectations from religious understandings, which she believes will address sexism and gender inequality within the Arab community.
Arab families function as communal in comparison with Americans, who are more individualistic roles that are independent of one another. Within an Arab family, parents and children often have ‘family friends’ where all parties within a household may know someone. In comparison, respondents describe the individualistic terms that exist in American culture, where children and parents do not necessarily belong to the same ‘community’ or share friendships. American families are described as having friends independent of one another.

since I’m Arab, a lot of us Arabs, our parents teach us to like, look forward and the fact that we have to make a name for our family and live up to our family’s names, and think of who we’re gonna be with, and our reputation and um, like what, what are you gonna do for the community. And, we’re taught to be very serious about what we do, like things, the ways we act, whereas Americans just don’t really care. - Budur

As the narratives from the children of immigrants illustrate, presentation of self ranks high in importance to Arabs overall, but especially for women.

Hibah illustrates that gender expectations are internalized through the parent-child relationship. Hibah’s father is as a business owner, and her mother is a homemaker. Due to these traditional gender roles in her household, she states, “I thought this was my destiny.” As an observer of her friend’s parents, there was a shift in her consciousness pertaining to the family and her gender role expectations:

I thought, growing up, I would have to have kids and stay at home, I didn’t know that I had like, I have the option to work if I wanted to and not have to be a homemaker. I thought it was assumed that the wife had to cook, clean and make dinner and raise kids, and the husband comes home and have [the wife has] dinner ready for him. Um, but from my friends experience that wasn’t the case. Both parents worked or, the mom stayed at home a lot of it, and the dad worked, and the dad had to cook. So you never got that in my house. – Hibah, female
Preserving tradition differentiate for the role of men and women. Self-respect and honor, for instance, are characteristics that are often expressed through by the symbolic representation of females in the household.

Dalal has a slightly different take on these roles. Despite the intragroup tensions, she explains how outsiders to the community mistake these practices for oppressive behavior towards females. She states:

no, I’m not oppressed. I don’t have that in my home. My dad’s not like that, my dad’s for females working and going to school. I feel like there’s this view of when they see Arab American females they right away counter that with, oh, she’s oppressed, she has no voice.

However, Dalal continues to describe her family values as “very strict on culture.”

My parents are the type, in the home you speak Arabic. You do not speak English. You hold on with the traditions of what you’re supposed to do in marriage and what you’re not supposed to do. You hold onto the tradition of a girl’s mentality…self-respect, and how it’s valued. And that should be continued no matter where you are…

Nonetheless, males and females, Muslims and Christians, hold a responsibility for how they represent their family to community members, and others in general.

let’s say self respect, respecting your family, everything you do is reflecting on your family image. – Jacob, male

These social norms, for group members, extend past their private space, and men and women play distinct roles with upholding the cultural standards. Sex segregation, for example, is one practice that is policed by community members. Cultural values and traditions, as Dalal expresses above, “should be continued no matter where you are.”

This gendered social etiquette becomes a part of describing the Arab person.

Your nicktif - like the lady that you do stuff you know like how you cook, how you dress… – Duha, female
Dating becomes a topic of contestation among members of the second generation. Having different standards than peers is one of them. As a twenty-five year old woman who is currently dating an Italian convert, Hibah, mentioned earlier, also experiences the tension of inter-ethnic dating selection.

There’s always the negative connotations where, you know, if you’re an Arab Muslim girl, you can’t really date. There’s guys who wanna date you, and then like they get offended when you say no. I had one guy tell me – he’s like, well, why don’t you go take those drapes off the wall and wrap yourself up and stay home and be single. You know? Like, those comments you have to deal with. – Suha, female

The double standard between women and men is illustrated in Layal’s comparison of her social interactions with the opposite sex in comparison to her older brother. She is a twenty-year old Palestinian Muslim, who does not wear hijab, and is dating an Italian young man who has converted to Islam. She explains that her older brother has monitored her dress and socialization, however, he deviates from these rules himself.

I was at school and I was wearing short sleeves and, for him to yell at me for wearing short sleeves is stupid…. I’m turning around the corner, and I see him with a girl and the girl is about to go put her head on his chest, and I’m like ‘what the…. Okay!’ He was even telling me, when he found out about my boyfriend, he was like, you know, ‘break up with him, you can’t be with him’ and he was telling him too, my boyfriend too, ‘you can’t see her, you didn’t tell me this from before’ and I was gonna tell him from before, but like, I couldn’t tell him right away you know, because its like, how am I gonna tell this kid who’s not really that familiar with the Arab culture. He’s starting to learn, you know, like constantly you know, about the Arab culture but like, tell him, ‘hey, I wanna marry you’ like right away, ‘I wanna marry you, you need to meet my dad’ it’s weird. It’s even weird for me.

There is an interesting webbing of religion and culture that produce increased surveillance on women. Culturally, it appears acceptable for men to express their sexual freedom, as they regulate the sexuality of women, who preserve family honor to a greater degree than men.
Confronting Gender Inequalities

there’s a lot of things I hate about it and I would never wanna apply to my children’s lives, when I have my own kids… they’re very sexist, it doesn’t matter what religion you are its just Arabs…I feel like Arabs just have that stuck in their head and it’s all culture, it’s not religion. And I’m gonna speak from like, an Islamic point of view right now. – Farhah, female

The parenting styles for children of immigrants are influenced by the host culture to which they have adapted (Kelley and Tseng 1992). Western values of individualism, autonomy, and independence – all which are more in line with authoritarian parenting styles (Triandis 1989; Rosenthal 1984) – challenge gender norms. Respondents in this study wish to adopt this authoritarian parenting style, which challenges the traditional family setting that they themselves experienced. For example, young women express they would allow their daughters to “go out more” or live independently, or in a dormitory for college. Rubba states that “it was a big fight with me and my mom and you know, me going out of state for school…. She would say ‘I trust you but I don’t trust those other people’ that type of scenario.”

I’m from a different generation. I’m more Americanized. Um, my mom would not think it’s okay for a girl to come home at 1[am] o’clock from the city. I think it’s okay as long as I’m not doing anything stupid, I know that I’m Arabic, I know that I’m Muslim, I know that I wouldn’t drink, I know that I wouldn’t sit there and be all over guys and it’s like that’s, it’s definitely different… – Malakah

Ethnicity and religion are often fused together, and used interchangeably by parents. This ethno-religious overlap in identity is sometimes adopted by offspring. However, children who are aware of cultural and religious distinctions challenge and try to separate the two; they are able to access how eib [shame] is used as a means of social control, when parents use it synonymously (and perhaps strategically) with haram [forbidden by God]. Children acknowledge the differences between what is considered
haram (actions forbidden by God) – a religious wrongdoing, and eib – something that is cultural and social, not religious.

I wanna marry a non-Arab but a Muslim man. They don’t want that. They, that’s where they’re like hold up, that’s not what our culture says we can do, ‘we’re not that modernized as you are, we haven’t accelerated to that point where you think we should be’… - Hibah, single, Palestinian Muslim woman

The second generation is more understanding of individualism; a concept that they have grown accustomed to in the United States. The dialogue on eib and haram is centered on double standards between men and women. Young men in this sample, for instance, never mention either. Young women wish to make these terms distinct so ethno-cultural, and religious identities are not used interchangeably, or fused together, as a method of social control. Throughout their dialogue, second generation women in this study specify that eib meant shameful, and was not a part of religious teachings. However, the term eib was often substituted with haram, a religious term that means forbidden. The misuse of these terms reaps social consequences, especially for women in the Arab community. Since women are overwhelming relied upon for ethno-cultural transmission, which includes upholding familial reputation within the Arab community, their role is especially important.

First off, there’s certain things in the culture I don’t like. I don’t like when they bring religion [up], everything is haram. No. We make things haram…. I don’t like the whole view that a girl can’t be out late, and a guy can be out late. Like, the gender issue, I don’t like that. I don’t care who you are, I don’t care what you have in between your pants, point is, this goes for you and her [male and female], you know. The whole issue of like, my parents have this thing like, I had Iraqi people come wanna marry me, my dad’s like ‘no can’t have Iraqi’ian’ it’s like, you know, their views on like other Arabs we only take Palestinian or Jordanian…. I really wanna raise my faith in my home, more spiritual. The connection of intentions. For me, the intentions. So what, wear the scarf, wear the eib aleik, go to jameh [mosque] 24-7, but if my heart is not pure, what is the point. I really wanna build a lot of friendship between me and my kids and not care what
people say. I feel like, I want my home to be based on what we – me and my husband – our family, want in our lives. Not what everybody else thinks we should have in our lives. – Dalal

I would want my kids to understand the difference between culture and religion at an earlier age. And then when it comes to religion, there are certain things I would stress differently that my parents, so I feel like at home, the concept of hijab, modesty, and your personal image was stressed a lot more than, like for example, not lying and your spirituality. I would constantly... Like, to me, even though my prayer’s on and off, I feel like I have a spiritual connection to God differently than... You know what I mean? It’s not just a concept of five daily prayers, to me, it’s a lot more than that. My connection to God. And that’s something that I feel like I would do with my kids, its that, at the end of the day, as long as you connect to God and you’re thinking of God, and you’re talking to God, to me that’s more important that you putting your hijab on. I would rather my daughter be not hijabi than my daughter be hijabi and not connected to God at all. You know what I mean? Like that kind of thing. – Salwa

These issues are central to women, who directly experience gender inequalities, and are conscious about changing them for their children. Cultural and religious distinctions are especially important to young women, who wish to change the social dynamics and construction pertaining to their ethnic identity.

The social and cultural context in which an individual is accustomed influences their perspective. In the case where parents are reared in a different cultural context than their children, a number of tensions arise within the institution of the family. As members of the second generation, respondents in this sample are at an advantage in comparison to their parents. They are familiar with American customs and values, many of which are a part of their habitus. In comparison, parents confront cultural changes that challenge the maintenance of their customs, traditions, and core values/beliefs. Horizontal influences of children offer alternative social patterns, many of which the second generation wish to themselves practice and adopt. The stark socio-cultural differences between first and second generation create tension in their relationship.
These tensions are greater for women than men, who have less pressure to retain ethnic or cultural traditions. In turn, the changes that are desired for the next generation are in large part a push by young women who desire equality. Nonetheless, Arab American men and women of the second generation desire patterns of assimilation. This includes greater integration within institutional settings, and in patterns of social, economic, and cultural contexts.
CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION

As a collective group, Arab American millennials have formed a new set of racial and ethnic boundaries that stray away from their first generation predecessors. A socio-cultural divide is present between the first and second generations, based on cultural differences. Children of immigrants realize that they deviate from standard cultural and traditional expectations from the first generation, which produces apprehension in regards to retaining their ethnic heritage. They understand that their lifestyle and behavior are set on unstable boundaries, which produce a great amount of cultural work on their part should they desire to maintain the standards that were shared with them from the first generation. Respondents describe ethnic maintenance as a more "natural" phenomenon for their parents, or the first generation. In contrast, children of immigrants describe cultural work as a necessary component for them to sustain these ethnic traditions and values. Through a negotiation process, the second generation determines the social conditions for Arab membership by setting boundaries based on a set of cultural work.

Second generation Palestinians in the U.S. possess a collective identity, and an imagined community, to Palestine. Many respondents in this study are politically active through academic organizations on college campuses, at local events, and/or they have been reared in a family environment where Palestinian ethno-political awareness was shared through dialogue. For members of the second generation, as illustrated, the construction of their Palestinian identity is a prominent part of their ethnic self in as much as they share it, defend it, and promote it. The social conditions for its construction occur through occasional travel to Palestine (mostly to the West Bank),
promoting political awareness through dialogue, and through their embodied identity. These conditions typically overlap, at least to some degree, with cultural characteristics as instrumental in shaping (and reshaping) actors ethnic selves (Nagel 1994) – as Palestinians.

As part of the Palestinian diaspora, children of Palestinian immigrants have an overlapping sense of identities, “some of these elements are local, some religious, and some draw on other national narratives, and all have been reshaped and reworked to fit a new narrative of identity” (Khalidi 2003: 194). The history of their parents’ life in Palestine (most from the West Bank), under Israeli occupation, influences their ethnic-racial identification and their political involvement in the U.S. It is this history that is influential in shaping the Palestinian ethno-political identity and imagined community.

The ethnic work deemed necessary for membership to the Arab group is different than that for inclusion into the Palestinian community. However, ethnic work is a necessary component for members to be considered “legitimate” in either scenario. Ethnic legitimacy is something that the second generation pride themselves on in comparison to one another. For instance, if an individual has not visited their parents’ country of origin, their peers challenge their ethnic authenticity. Interestingly, some of the conditions that respondents initially use to define and solidifying Arab membership, such as Arabic fluency, are negotiated as less important since they themselves do not possess these criteria.

General descriptions for Arab membership include genealogical connections to the Middle East, through parental inheritance, and linguistic commonality. Membership to the Arab group is loosely defined, whereas, respondents apply greater regulations for
membership to the Palestinian community. In addition to cultural attributes, such as linguistic dialect, Palestinian engagement in supporting Palestinian freedom transnationally is considered to prove one’s authenticity to membership. This negotiation process is based on the realization that, as children of immigrants, the second generation does not possess a “natural” ethnic membership at birth or by their upbringing in a society where they are a minority. By means of self-reflection, and cultural connections in one’s life (political involvement, travel to parents’ country of origin) ethnic authenticity and membership are retained. Deviating from these criteria jeopardizes one’s Palestinian ethnic group membership.

Ethnic identity is generally supported by religious, political, familial, and/or residential relationships, or though an intersection or ethnic and cultural influences (Goodenow and Espin 2003). Parents begin to integrate and interest children in ethno-religious practices and networks, such as enrollment in religious or Arabic courses, in elementary school. The interactions and friendships that form through direct institutional affiliation suggest that solid social networks are established in academic, religious settings, and the family. In Bridgeview, or “Little Palestine,” many respondents attend school with Arab and Muslim peers due to their concentration in the area. However, the social network among Arab Muslims allows for group membership to transcend regional boundaries to other Arab Muslims in the greater Chicagoland area.

Among Arab Muslim families, friendships spark through the associations of parents’ family-friends, others during elementary school, high school, or Saturday/Sunday School. Nearly all respondents grew up with affiliation to an ethno-religious institution, attending at least once a week. Respondents express that they typically form close
friendships before college, with some solidifying friendships during their early adolescent years (10-14 years old). These social connections crystalize at a very young age, elementary through high school, making new friendships somewhat fleeting.

Although children of immigrants wish to assimilate to American culture during their early adolescent years to avoid embarrassment (Lee and Zhou 2004), Arab Americans gain interest ethnic identity practices around the time they entered college. This sense of community that develops through activism and common political interest solidifies social networks. Many respondents are introduced to new social ties that transcend religious and local social networks during their college years. More specifically, it is through organizations, such as SJP, where Palestinian Muslims and Palestinian Christians cross paths and form new friendships based on a common interest – Palestine.

Membership in SJP allows for a pan-Arab identity to emerge among members, since the group is not exclusive to Palestinians. The high concentration of Palestinians, specifically in the Chicagoland area, can marginalize other Arabs in the region. Students who are Syrian, Egyptian, and of other Arab ancestry express a pan-ethnic solidarity through their mobilization in SJP. Their particular interest lies in establishing awareness of the Palestinian issue, which plays a pivotal role in the Arab world that is inclusive of their country of origin.

Although the millennial generations civic activism has been disputed (Twenge 2012), respondents in this study illustrate that ethno-religious characteristics and generational status increase political engagement. In fact, it is through political activism that Arab American second generation millennials are united, and share a collective identity.
Through such educational institutions, youth build supportive social networks that provide them with a space and community that focuses specifically on deterring ethnic and religious group discrimination. This group effort, joined by Arabs collectively (Egyptians, Syrians), through SJP in this case, supports group solidarity, an ethnic sense of community in a multi-ethnic setting, and Palestinian nationalistic unity through political activism. A local, national, and transnational sense of solidarity all provide a degree of ethno-religious community that constructs and replenishes one’s identity and a sense of belonging.

Discrimination plays a part in shaping the salience of respondents’ Arab and Muslim identity. The discrimination of Muslims in the U.S. increased by seventy-percent after 9/11, with Arab Americans three-times as likely to be racially profiled in comparison to their white counterparts. Post 9/11 reports of racism, hate crimes, and harassment have significantly targeted Arabs and Muslims (Smith 2004)\(^1\). Muslim respondents prioritize their religious identity to that of a pan-ethnic Arab identity, which is parallel to findings in Naber’s work (2012). Religion remains the most important part of Arab American Muslim identity, and it crosses multiple identities, including racial and gender lines, pan-ethnic identity as Middle Eastern, national identity as American, and specific country of origin e.g. Palestinian, Syrian, Jordanian. The social stigma on Islam in the U.S., and discrimination towards Arabs and Muslims amplify religious and cultural markers, especially for women, as group members see themselves in ethnic terms. Arabs

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\(^1\) The government’s role in established the USA Patriot Act, to target terrorist acts further intensified the racial profiling that has detained, deported, threatened and humiliated Arabs and Muslims. As precautionary measurements, National Security ordered young men from Islamic countries to be “questioned, fingerprinted, photographed, and assigned a registration number” (Smith 2004: 4).
internalize their sense of “outsider” or otherness through discriminatory treatment that they experience from their host society, through their deviation to religious (Muslim) or ethnic (Arab, regardless of country of origin) membership. Thus, national identification is not equated with citizenship. Being born and/or raised in the U.S. is not in itself a condition that enables respondents to claim American national identification. In the minds of second generation Arabs, their ethno-religious and American national identities are understood as competing terms. American national identity and racial classifications are often trumped by ethnic or religious memberships.

One’s national identification as ‘American’ or ‘Arab American’ are used strategically and situationally in terms of citizenship, in terms of upbringing e.g., “I’m American because I was raised in America,” especially in comparison to the first generation, or in cases where they feel their American national belonging is threatened. Respondents frequently refer to “back home” as synonymous to their country of origin or to define their sense of belonging to a larger community outside of the U.S. Country of origin is then applied as an interchangeable term with national identification (in casual conversations with various audience members). Respondents merge the use of their country of origin e.g. Palestinian, Jordanian, to describe their nationality.

The discriminatory treatment that Arab Muslims face in the US (Cainkar 2009) appears to influence the use of American or Arab American for members of the second generation. As Tatum (1997) explains, group member similarities produce social cohesion among members. As a result, Arab Muslim millennials feel a strong sense of belonging to their ethno-religious communities where they feel an ethnic and/or religious
overlap (immediate and extended family, religious affiliates, ethnic e.g. Palestinian, and pan-ethnic Arab, Middle Eastern).

One’s place of residence, as well as institutional ties and affiliations (educational, religious), are general spaces where members’ ethnic culture is absorbed and social networks are nurtured. The social conditions that shape their ethnic consciousness and replenishment differ based on available raw ethnic materials (Jimenez 2010). Bridgeview residents, and participants who lived outside Bridgeview area, in predominately white or multi-racial/ethnic neighborhoods, possess an equally strong Arab ethnic identity. Nonetheless, Bridgeview residents immersion in a highly concentrated Arab Muslim environment, one with a greater immigrant population and ethnic market, support their ethnic development and formation.

On the other hand, folks living outside of the area, in predominately white or diverse neighborhood, appear to encounter greater discrimination that shaped their ethnic consciousness. That is not to state that the Bridgeview community has not themselves endured discrimination. As a matter of fact, in the height of 9/11, the Arab Muslim communities living in Bridgeview were primary targets of discrimination (Abowd 2002). However, Arabs (Arab Muslim women especially, Canikar 2005) living outside the ethnic enclave in diverse or white neighborhood, over a decade after 9/11, express that their interactions within their communities are met with discriminatory treatment. Since the Bridgeview area is highly concentrated with Arab Muslims, residents within that area express racial, ethnic, or religious discriminatory treatment particularly when they are outside of Bridgeview. Nonetheless, in both cases, Arab Bridgeview residents and non-residents find comfort through ethno-religious institutions, social networks, and events
(weddings, religious holidays). However, the ethnic populated space presents a paradox for group members.

On the one hand, members who live in Bridgeview appreciate the commonality of their ethno-religious identity the space offers, as they have access to an ethnic market and members of the community whom they feel most comfortable amongst. However, these residents also feel more policed space, as their privacy and individuality are compromised. In areas with a higher density of Arabs, such as Bridgeview, it is assumed there is more surveillance on the individual. This social pressure generates through a tight knit community, many from Betunia in the West Bank, where group members likely know one another and can share information. As a result, group members feel the need to represent themselves (and the family, who are one unit in terms of honor) according to cultural, and traditional standards to prevent gossip. Youth who reside in highly Arab concentrated areas report feeling policed by fellow Arabs. This intra-group surveillance and gossip among the community, creates tension and detachment between members. Children of immigrants manage to minimize such occurrences by interacting with persons outside of their community, or with Arabs in low Arab concentrated areas – typically stirring away from the first generation altogether.

In comparison, respondents who are scattered around the Chicagoland area (north/west side of Chicago) discuss the costs and benefits of living in areas with low Arab-density space. As explained by members in these more diverse communities, social experiences with intergroup members (race, ethnicity, religion) are met with prejudice, and racist attitudes. In comparison, these social tensions were not as noticeable to Arab residents in Bridgeview. Despite these encounters however, non-
Bridgeview residents prefer less populated Arab areas. For them, a highly concentrated Arab space jeopardizes their privacy and anonymity. Respondents who live outside of Bridgeview were generally content with their distance from the Arab community. They prefer to visit Bridgeview on their own terms (e.g. special occasions, to visit family or friends) and return to their homes in low populated Arab area.

Regardless of resident location, it is clear that individuals present themselves according to some ethnic standards. In the Bridgeview community especially, residents and non-residents actively attempt to minimize any gossip by decreasing public attention toward them. Similarly, outside of their ethno-religious community, group members make an effort to present an oppositional identity and serve as a group representative e.g. “good Arab” to challenge larger group stereotypes. Place of residence, and ethnic group presence, as exemplified, factor into member's ethnic group consciousness. In both cases, participants manage their identity and impression strategically and act accordingly to the spaces that they occupy.

The degree of socio-cultural variation between the first and second generation creates a communication gap in the family and in the community. As mentioned, this communication gap is apparent through first generation standards, which are perceived as ridged, and produce deviant behavior when offspring do not obey traditions. In the family context, immigrant parents attempt to prevent their offspring from assimilating into host society standards produce tensions between parent-children. As a result, children of immigrants live double-lives, as they assimilate into some host society standards in secrecy of their parental knowledge. However, this communication gap goes beyond the family setting. Bridgeview illustrates how the communication gap
reproduces itself in public settings, and is highly visible in spaces that constitute high concentrations of persons with Arab ancestry, or spaces with a high amount of Arab immigrants. The consequences of this communication gap divide the Arab populace in a few ways. It creates a gap amongst first and second-generation group members, it creates tensions between the parent-child relationship, and it lessens the transmission and retention of socio-cultural, and ethnic materials by threatening group cohesion.

Since the second generation appreciates greater acculturation into their host society, they have decided to address the communication gap. Respondents in this study express cultural distinction from their American counterparts, they also wish to stray away from Arab traditions and form their own standards in their childrearing practices. Despite the possible Arab articulation of American values as degenerate, lacking moral value, and sexually deviant (Naber 2012), respondents in this study express cultural distinctions from their American counterparts, but they also wish to stray away from Arab traditions and form their own standards in their childrearing practices. Many youth have begun to address this by informing their parents of the host culture standards, through an upward vertical transmission pattern; in return, some parents have responded positively. Children of immigrants feel that sharing their interests with their parents can sometimes change their perspective. Most often, these experiences offer offspring with an opportunity to travel, or live in a dormitory on campus (rare, but possible). Nonetheless, these interactions were limited and the communication gap between parents and children persists due to their nonnegotiable traditional standards.

As middle class families, the second-generation in this study desire to abandon their parents’ authoritarian parenting style and adopt an authoritative one in its place. This
change in parenting was expressed as the second generation’s desire to support their children’s individuality and autonomy. Arab American millennials also support the idea of inter-racial and inter-ethnic involvement. Having this level of comfort and understanding of the host culture produces this parenting strategy, in large part. Many members have accepted more than “a degree” of Western values, which weaken the survival of their ethnic retention for the next generation. The changes in the intergenerational transmission patterns by members of the second generation raise questions in the retention of ethnic raw materials, and values for future generations of Arab Americans.
### Interviewer Information

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<tr>
<th>How was interview conducted?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In person (location: _________)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Skype</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Telephone</td>
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### Demographic Questions

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<tr>
<th>In what year were you born? __________</th>
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<tr>
<th>In what country were you born?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Other __________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. In what year did you come to live in the U.S.? __________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. What country did you immigrate from? __________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Are you a U.S. citizen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<th>In what country was your mother born?</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. US</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Other __________</td>
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<tr>
<th>In what country was your father born?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. US</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Other __________</td>
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<tr>
<th>What is the highest grade of school or degree that you completed?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Less than high school (less than 9th grade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Some high school (9, 10, 11th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Completed high school or GED (12th grade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Some college (13, 14, 15th grade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Associate degree (AA/AS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Bachelor’s degree (BA/AB/BS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Master’s degree (MA/MS/MEng/Med/MSN/MBA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Professional degree (MD/DDS/DVM/LLB/JD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Doctoral degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Other __________</td>
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<tr>
<th>What is your occupation?</th>
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<tr>
<th>What is your mother’s highest level of education?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtained in US? Occupation?</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your father’s highest level of education?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Obtained in US? Occupation?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you were in high school, did your parents’ rent/own the home you live in?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Neither</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the time you were in high school, how would you describe your family’s wealth relative to the average American?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Not poor but below average
3. At the average
4. Above average but not wealthy
Wealthier than most Americans

Sex of respondent:
1. Male
5. Female

Using the following categories, what is your race? [options on card below provided]
1. White
2. Black, African American, Negro
3. American Indian or Alaska Native
4. Asian
5. Pacific Islander
6. Other

*Probe: How did you come to that response?*

According to the US Census, Middle Eastern people are categorized as 'White.' What are your thoughts on this classification?

2. Is it an advantage or disadvantage to Arabs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES:</th>
<th>QUESTIONS:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General knowledge of ethnic group and identity:</td>
<td>Who is included in the group ‘Arab’? What characteristics define who is Arab? Is there such thing as an Arab experience? Public? Private?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group association:</th>
<th>Would you characterize yourself as Arab? What characteristics make YOU Arab? <em>Probe: What types of things prompt you to identify as Arab?</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would you characterize yourself as American? What characteristics make YOU American? <em>Probe: What types of things prompt you to identify as American?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How important is it to you that people recognize your Arab descent? As a [R’s specific ethnic origin], what makes you similar to other Arabs? Different?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If Palestinian, what makes someone Palestinian? What makes YOU Palestinian?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palestinian Collective Narrative</th>
<th>Can you name 3 events that are important in the history of the Palestinians?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language:</th>
<th>When do you speak these languages? <em>Probe: At work? At family gatherings? In a public places?</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you speak a language other than English at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Yes</td>
<td>1. Yes a. What language(s) is it (are they)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No</td>
<td>2. No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| How did you learn to speak these languages? [If Arabic, what dialect? Madani? Fala3i?] | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leisure Activities (linked with ethnic group):</th>
<th>Social Networks:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been to your parent’s homeland?</td>
<td>If you were to categorize your closest friends by race/ethnic group, where would you say they are from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no: Is traveling to there something you have considered? Why?</td>
<td>Do you have friends who were born in the Middle East? How did you meet them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes: When did you go? For what purpose? Who did you visit? How many times have you visited?</td>
<td>How often do you spend time with Arab-Americans? In what context? Probe: What religion would you say they belong to (e.g. Christian, Muslim)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What festivities, holidays, or events do you spend with people of your ethnic background? Probe: What types of things do you do? Where do they take place? Any customs or traditions? Family gatherings? (Birthdays, holidays) Religious gatherings? (Weddings, funerals) Friend gatherings? (Casual visits at home, hookah lounges)</td>
<td>How often do you spend time with Arabs immigrants? In what context? Probe: What religion would you say they belong to (e.g. Christian, Muslim)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking back to your upbringing, has celebrating these activities changed over time? Probe: Have your parents influenced your partaking in these activities growing up? Do you choose to/not to attend them today? Why?</td>
<td>Where would you say you spend most of your time in the city (e.g. what area)? With what group of people?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**With whom do you speak these languages?**

**Do you read and/or write in these languages?**
*Probe:
  - Where did you learn?
  - When do you read/write in these languages?*

**Do you ever listen to music, or watch TV in Arabic?**
*Probe:
  - What do you watch?*

**Do you communicate with anyone online in Arabic?**
*With whom? For what reasons?*

**Situational Identity:**
*Do you feel that your response to how you define your ethnic identity changes depending on your audience? Probe: How would you identify yourself to:***
| a. Members of the Arab community  
| b. Your co-workers  
| c. Non-Arabs  
| d. Other groups |

Do you feel connected to your ethnic identity? What are ways in which you feel connected? Disconnected?

Do people ask you about your ethnic background?
- What do you think prompts them to ask?
- What racial/ethnic identity do people assume of you? How do you feel about that?

How do people react to your identifying as [ethnic identity specified by participant]? Are there any particular reasons that come to mind? Probe: What are the racial/ethnic compositions of those who you feel are not supportive of your ethnic identity?

Where/When do you feel most comfortable of your ethnic identity? Why?
Probe: Racial/ethnic compositions of audience.

Where/When do you feel least comfortable of your ethnic identity? Why?
Probe: Racial/ethnic compositions of audience.

**Neighborhood:**
Can you tell me about the neighborhood that you grew up in?
Neighborhood: _______________

Probe:
- What were the race/ethnicity of your neighbors?
- Who are the race/ethnic groups in your neighborhood today?
  - Neighborhood:
  - How are they similar/different? Which do you consider a better neighborhood? Why?

What areas in Chicago do you feel have a high concentration of Arabs?

How does it feel to visit these Arab concentrated areas?
Probe:
- Do you feel the need to modify your behavior in these places?
- How is this different, in comparison to a place where little to no Arabs live?

Do you feel that your response to how you define your ethnic identity changes depending on where you are in Chicago?
Probe:
  a. Your neighborhood
  b. The opposite end of town
  c. A hookah café
  d. Other location

Are there specific locations where you would refrain from identifying as Arab?

**Work**
Are you currently working (full time or part time)?
- Where is the location of your job?
- What is the racial/ethnic group that characterizes your workplace?
- How did you get your job there?
- Does your ethnic identity ever matter at work?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that your ethnic identity helps or hinders you at work? How?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your TOTAL family income before taxes for the last year?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less than $10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $10,000 - $14,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $15,000 - $19,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $20,000 - $29,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $30,000 - $39,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $40,000 - $49,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $50,000 - $74,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $75,000 - $99,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $100,000 - $199,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $200,000 or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What were the race/ethnicity of your friends in grade school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What were the race/ethnicity of other students in grade school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What were the race/ethnicity of your friends in high school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What were the race/ethnicity of other students in high school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What were the race/ethnicity of your friends in college?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What were the race/ethnicity of other students in college?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What best describes your religion?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Christian (denomination)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jewish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Muslim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Atheist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it important to specify your religion to others? To any group in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particular?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thinking about your religion, to what extent do you observe religious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rules?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is it important to you to make a point of doing any of the following</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>things? Please tell me all that apply:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attending Friday prayers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading or listening to the Quran regularly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Giving Charity (Zakat)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attending religious education classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Praying daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Marrying a Muslim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Fasting  
8. Wearing hijab  
9. Wearing a religious symbol  
10. Telling others about your faith  
11. Other __________

Tell me about the mosque you attend. What is the racial/ethnic background of mosque-goers?

**Christians:**

Is it important to you to make a point of doing any of the following things? Please tell me all that apply:

1. Attending church on Sunday  
2. Reading the bible regularly  
3. Giving to charity or tithing  
4. Attending religious education classes (‘Sunday school’)  
5. Praying daily  
6. Marrying a Christian  
7. Fasting  
8. Dressing modestly  
9. Wearing a religious symbol  
10. Telling others about your faith  
11. Other __________

Tell me about the church you attend. What is the racial/ethnic background of churchgoers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Familial transmission:</th>
<th>Does your immediate “birth” family ever discuss your family’s background? Religious background? Country ‘back home’ or country of origin? If yes, what do they talk about?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family is the primary agent of socialization, cultural values and transmission (Schneewind 1999) and a necessary component to understand ethnic identity</td>
<td>Is there a consensus on how you choose to identify your ethnicity? How do you feel your ethnic identity differs from that of your parents? Probe: Do you think you and your parents identify in the same way or differently? How?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that your parent’s values/views have changed due to the interaction you have had with them?</td>
<td>Do you feel that your parents have become more ‘Americanized’ because of the values that you may have introduced to them? Are there other factors that you feel have impacted your parents identity as less ‘Arab’ and/or more ‘American’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many siblings do you have?</td>
<td>How would this be similar to the way your parents raised you? How would it be different?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tell me about how you (will) raise your children?

| Do you have children? | 1. Yes  
2. No  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the age of your youngest and eldest children?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many people live in your household INCLUDING yourself, children/babies, and anyone who sleeps there for over half the nights every month?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dating/Marriage:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Married</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Widowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Divorced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Separated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Never married</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Domestic partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a significant other?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes: What is your spouse’s/partner’s ancestry or ethnic origin?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner’s highest level of education?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner’s work? Full/part time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who do you live with?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Alone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Unmarried partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Married partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Partner’s parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How long does it take to drive from your home to your parents home?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your in-laws home?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have you dated someone who is not of Arab descent?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probe:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was your parent’s reaction?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have you dated someone who is not (Christian/Muslim –respondent’s religion)?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probe:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What was your parent’s reaction?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Was this person of Arab descent?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is ethnic background a factor in any way in whom you date? How?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is religion a factor in any way in whom you date? How?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Card Method (index cards):**
Measure the effect of group categorization upon the subjects as they allocate cards, which indicate identity (country of origin, pan-ethnicity, ethnic, racial, other)
Provides a baseline to discuss the importance of social identity based upon identity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional information/comments:</th>
<th>Is there anything else that you would like to add to this interview?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional Participants:</td>
<td>Do you have the names/numbers of 3 people that would participate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer Observations:</td>
<td>Complexion of Respondent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Very dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Very light</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview end time:  
Length of interview:
Arab Identity in Chicago

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of second generation Arab Americans in Chicago.

PARTICIPANT CRITERIA:
- Arab ancestry
- 18-33 years old
- born in the U.S. or immigrated to the U.S. before age 5

Interested in participating?

CONTACT:
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Cyouaki1@ufl.edu
773.414.2474

TAKE ONE:

What you will be asked to do in the study: Participants will be asked a series of questions regarding their ethnic identity. The interview is confidential. Each interview will take place face-to-face or using Skype. The researcher will briefly review the purpose of the study, and begin with the in-depth interview. Individuals are welcomed to chime in as they wish. During the session, the researcher will be taking notes and using probing questions to be sure that the interview is focused on the study at hand.
Figure C-1. Arab Ancestry in the Chicagoland Area
Figure D-1. The Chicago Metropolitan area falls under the Cook County. Included in the Arab American Institute’s (2010) definition are Assyrians, Palestinians, and Jordanians – those who identify as having an Arab-speaking ancestry. 
http://www.aaiusa.org/state-profiles-detailed
Figure E-1. Between 1980 and 2008, the Arab American population (Assyrians, Palestinians, Jordanians) nearly tripled. The largest Arab population is noted as Palestinian. Accounting for “ancestry” data in the Census began in 1980. http://www.aaiusa.org/state-profiles-detailed
LIST OF REFERENCES


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Kimmerling, Baruch, and Joel S. Migdal. 2003.*The Palestinian People: A History*.


Mosque Foundation. 2016. “


(http://www.pewhispanic.org/2004/03/19/generational-differences/).


UNWRA 2005. "Table 1.0: Total Registered Refugees per Country per Area" Publications and Statistics.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Claudia Youakim received a Bachelor of Arts from Loyola University in Chicago, a Master of Arts from DePaul University, and a Doctor of Philosophy and Certificate in Women’s Studies and from the University of Florida.