To all of my siblings struggling to belong
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Of course none of this would have been possible without the blessings of Allah (SWT). There are also a number of people I would like to thank for their support, love, and unwavering confidence in me.

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Halsey

Jordan

The Traditional Gender Differences: Modern Day Princes

Familial Relationships

Social Media

Divided between the United States and the Middle East

Identity is Fluid, Dynamic, and Multifaceted

The Role of Media: Finding an Outlet in the Face of Stereotyping and Racism

Gender Expectations

Identity Options and Context: Sojourners

Gender Differences: Modern Day Princes

Traditional Gender Roles and Marriage

The Hijab: Personal Choice, Discrimination, and Responsibility

Identity Construction within the School Context: Silence and Resistance

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Routes of Resistance

THE PARTICIPANTS

Spirit

Past

Present

Future

Jordan

Past

Present

Future

Halsey

Past

Present

Future

Hope

Past

Present

Future

FINDINGS

Identity Options and Context: Sojourners

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<td>This refers to how an individual identifies themselves as a member of a group. This membership is based on social interactions amongst individuals (Witteborn, 2007).</td>
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<td>Culture</td>
<td>A set of shared beliefs, attitudes, values, social practices, and or experiences that are influenced by historical, social, political, and economic factors that make up a group of people (Nieto, 2004).</td>
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<td>Diaspora</td>
<td>A Diaspora occurs when a group is forced to leave their homeland, usually for a political or economic reason. The dispersed group comes to reside in two or more geographic areas, and there is some kind of political, cultural, social, or economic connection amongst the groups. Finally, the scattered group forms a relationship or an attachment to the homeland, whether it is shared collective memories passed on to future generations, a longing to return to the homeland, or a pledge to re-establish their mother country (Aoudé, 2001).</td>
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<td>Identity</td>
<td>Represents an individual’s core sense of self such as personal characteristics, attributes, and identification with various identity dimensions such as sexual orientation, race, culture, gender, religion, and social class. The saliency of these dimensions towards an individual’s core is influenced by contextual factors such as family background, sociocultural conditions, current experiences, and career decisions and life planning. Finally, the way an individual interprets contextual factors is the meaning-making aspect of how identity is constructed (Abes, Jones, &amp; McEwen, 2007).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim(a)</td>
<td>A believer of Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>Historians refer to Palestine as the occupied territories within the state of Israel, which are the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. However, when Palestinians refer to Palestine they are referring to modern day Israel, including the occupied territories. Participants will be asked to articulate which definition they connect with.</td>
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THE MULTIPLE IDENTITIES OF SECOND GENERATION PALESTINIAN AMERICAN MUSLIM FEMALE ADOLESCENTS

By

Zane T. Hasan

August 2018

Chair: Ester J. de Jong
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge about the multiple identities of second-generation Palestinian Muslim-American female adolescents. The literature review explored current research on the targeted population as it related to identity. Two main research questions guided this study: (1) how do second generation Palestinian American Muslim female adolescents construct their identities and (2) how do second generation Palestinian American Muslim female adolescents construct their identities in the context of their school life. The four participants were recruited through connections at the mosque and membership in professional Arab organizations. The forms of data used in this study were: (1) individual interviewing, (2) artifact elicitation, and (3) document analysis. This was a qualitative study that utilized narrative analysis as a way to make sense of the data and it followed Abes, Jones, and McEwen’s (2007) reconceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity to inform the study. In response to the first research question, a number of findings came about as a result of the data. First, identity is multifaceted and some identity options become more or less salient in response to changes in context due to migration and movement. Moreover, contextual factors such as geographical location and community influenced the saliency of identity dimensions. Another finding was affirmative identity options were sought out in response to negative media portrayals and
sociopolitical discourse in the United States. The participants rejected media stereotypes and sought positive images of identity through social media and familial relationships. Also, the participants rejected stereotypes related to all aspects of their identity dimensions with the exception of gender expectations. The study also noted the tension surrounding the decision to wear the hijab. The decision to wear the hijab was a personal choice. The participants in this study were hesitant and apprehensive to put on the hijab. A related factor for this hesitancy was the fact that the hijab was a physical marker of Islam and a physical marker of discrimination. The participants saw that women who wore the hijab faced discrimination from non-Muslims, which impacted their identity construction. In the context of school, environment made a significant impact on identity construction. Also, various schooling practices can silence minority student identities. As a result, the participants resisted silencing and sought affirmation through extracurricular activities. Participants also accelerated their education by graduating high school one year early as a way to escape a negative school environment. As a result, the participants created a strong student identity. A revised model of multiple dimensions of identity is proposed in light of the current study. Finally, the researcher shared implications for future research as a direct result of this study.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are approximately 1.8 million Americans of Arab descent living in the United States as of 2010 (Pew Research Center, 2012). While there is difficulty in counting this population (the Census and other demographic data collection forms do not include a separate category for “Arab” or “Middle Eastern”), an examination of the available data shows that the number of Arab residents in the U.S. has grown by 91% since the 1990 census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), and in that same time, the number of Arab-American citizens has more than doubled (Arab American Institute Foundation [AAIF], 2012).

Palestinians, who are the focus of this study, constitute a distinct subpopulation among Arabs. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this population has steadily increased. In 2010, there were 250,000 Palestinians living across the United States (Christison, 2017). These numbers include second and third generation Palestinians who have grown up in the United States and abroad. Several factors contributed to this increase, including multiple wars and changing immigration rules in Israel (Hourani, 1991). As the Arab population has increased, tensions have risen beginning with the September 11 attacks and continuing with recent political developments. Fear and hostility toward Muslim-Arab terrorists has led to widespread discrimination against all Arabs, including Palestinians. Muslim Arabs are confronted with discourses that position them as “violent,” “fundamental,” and “radical” terrorists (Amer & Awad, 2016) and they are facing exclusionary policies and practices (Abu El Haj, 2007). According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), there was a 1,700% increase of hate crimes specifically against Muslim Americans from 2000 to 2001 (Anderson, 2002). At the time of the 2016 election, Arab Americans said they feared for their safety, feared they would face increased discrimination, and
feared increased negative U.S. relations with the Arab world if Donald Trump were elected president (AAIF, 2016).

The association of all Arabs with terrorists, compounded with the fact that this population does not fit in the “White/Caucasian” category has led to a widespread racist attitude toward the entire Arab population.

**Problem Statement**

According to a recent report by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, *American Muslim Poll 2017: Muslims at the Crossroads* (ISPU), Muslim-American students are four times more likely to be bullied in school than non-Muslim students (Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, 2017). About 42% of Muslim-American students grade K through 12 reported insults or physical assaults at school within the past year. The perpetrators of the incidents were other students and teachers in their school. Amer and Awad (2016) conducted a PsycINFO Boolean search of the research literature that contained all permutations of the word Arab (including Middle Eastern and all 22 specific sub-populations) and American in the title. They found that up until the year 2001, there was approximately zero to three publications annually. After 2001, the amount of research on Arab Americans grew with a range of 13 to 23 articles published annually. However, research on this population is still sorely lacking. Given the increased presence of Arab Muslims in general and Palestinians specifically and the increased real and symbolic violence reported in schools, it is imperative to enhance our understanding of their experiences and how they negotiate schooling.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to focus on the ways in which second generation Palestinian-American Muslim female adolescents constructed and described their identities in
general and specifically in the context of school life. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. How do second generation Palestinian-American Muslim female adolescent students construct their identities?
2. How do second generation Palestinian-American Muslim female adolescent students construct their identities in the context of their school life?

Through in-depth interviews, artifact elicitation, document collection, and reflective journaling, the study focused on how students reflected on their identity and those experiences in school that helped to shape their identity.

**Conceptual Framework**

This research relies upon Abes, Jones, and McEwen’s (2007) model of multiple dimensions of identity. Abes et al. (2007) draw from social constructionist theory, which “considered identity to be socially, historically, politically, and culturally constructed at both the institutional and individual levels” (p. 1). This means that identity is fluid and constantly in a state of flux, dynamic and complex rather than static and one-dimensional. In this model, identity is defined as an individual’s core sense of self, including aspects such as personal characteristics, attributes, and identification with certain identity dimensions, such as sexual orientation, race, culture, gender, religion, and social class. The saliency of these aspects are influenced by contextual factors such as family background, sociocultural conditions, current experiences, and career decisions and life planning. In summation, identity is constructed according to contextual influences on the fluid dimensional facets of a person’s core sense of self.

**Significance of the Study**

There have been multiple studies regarding Palestinian migrants in the U.S. and their relationship with the Arab-Israeli conflict (Alazaroo & Hunt, 2003; Brodmann, Cuadra, Allouche, & Hillis, 2012; Brown, 2001; Olsen & Olsen, 2010), but the experiences of second-
generation Palestinian-American Muslim female adolescents have not been examined in-depth. This study addresses three gaps in the literature. First, this study contributes to knowledge and understanding of second-generation Palestinian female high school students, as well as identity formation in the United States and American schools. While the literature chronicles the experiences of Arab Americans with respect to one facet of identity, such as ethnicity or religion, the research generally does not reveal the multi-faceted nature of all factors related to one’s identity, including ethnicity, religion, gender, and generational status. Additionally, much of the research related to Palestinians specifically is mainly in direct reference to the current political situation with Israel. This study re-focuses on the multi-faceted identity of Palestinians living in the U.S.

Furthermore, this study provides a platform to future study of an unexplored group and their experiences. Second generation Palestinian-American Muslim female high school students can provide researchers and educators alike with insight on the educational implications in schools. Research reveals that by validating students’ cultural and linguistic background within our schools, students will possess a positive sense of self and feel invested in school (Banks, 2007; Cummins, 2001; Wingfield & Karaman, 2000).

Finally, identity has rich historical underpinnings and has been examined through multiple lenses; however, past researchers have only focused on one aspect of identity, such as ethnicity, race, or gender. They failed to consider the intersectionality of all of these aspects of identity. Therefore, through the current case study of second generation Palestinian-American Muslim female high school students, the researcher contributes and furthers the scholarship on identity formation. Chapter 2 presents an up-to-date review of the literature on identity and identity construction in relation to Arabs. Chapter 3 reveals the methodology with which the
study was carried out. Chapter 4 provides an individual analysis of each of the participants so as to ensure each participant is given a voice and their narrative is told. Chapter 5 presents a cross case analysis of the data collected on all four participants. Chapter 6 presents a discussion of findings and how it relates to the current literature on identity regarding Palestinian Americans. Finally, Chapter 7 shares implications for scholars and educators and ideas for future research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand how second generation Palestinian-American Muslim female adolescents describe and construct their identities as well as to understand how their experiences in school have shaped that identity construction, this chapter begins with a discussion of different models of identity and presents Abes et al.’s (2007) model of multiple identities as the model that directs this study. Using the lens of Abes et al. (2007), a review of the literature as it specifically relates to Arabs and Palestinians in the United States will be presented next. The chapter concludes by revisiting the Abes et al. (2007) conceptual model as applied to Palestinian-Muslim female adolescents.

**Identity Development of Adolescents**

Multiple models for adolescent identity development and identity construction have been proposed. Some models have specifically focused on immigrant children (Crocetti, 2017); others include aspects of ethnicity, language, and race but are more generic in nature (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1990, 1992, 1995; Phinney, 1990, 1992). This study draws from an identity framework proposed by Abes et al. (2007). Before explaining this framework, this section first presents a brief review of how identity has been conceptualized in research. To begin, a review of identity development in previous research is discussed. Next, a reconceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity is introduced (Abes et al., 2007). This section orients the reader to the original model of multiple dimensions of identity. Finally, the section ends with why Abes et al.’s (2007) framework is appropriate for this study.

**Identity Development: Past Research**

Previous identity development models for adolescents have shared three basic premises that limited their accuracy. First, previous models have tended to focus on only one aspect or one
dimension of identity. For example, earlier researchers targeted single identities, such as ethnicity (Berry 2008; Phinney, 2004), race (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1995), sexual (Cass, 1979; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996), and gender (Butler, 1995; Ossana, Helms, & Leonard, 1992; O’Neil, Egan, Owen, & Murray, 1993) exclusively, without taking into account the interactions between these dimensions in identity formation.

Earlier models assumed a predictable cycle of identity development. For example, studies by Marcia (1980) describe an individual’s progression through a journey of distinct mental phases in identity construction. The first phase is an exploration phase wherein the individual questions their place in the world, triggered by a calamity or an event that disrupts their sense of normalcy, such as an act of discrimination or prejudice. This act of prejudice serves as the reason or the catalyst for the exploration of identity. The second phase is a stage of “foreclosed identity” (Dey, 2012, p. 23) where an individual follows an authority figure without scrutiny. The third phase is a promise phase in which the individual takes a journey back to normalcy. In this third phase, the individual finds clarity in how they see the world and how others in the world see them (Marcia, 1980).

Finally, past studies often used static understandings of identity. Static in identity theory means that once individuals progressed through the linear stages of identity development, in the third phase or the promise phase, adolescents were committed to their new identity (Cross, 1995; Erikson, 1968; Helms, 1995; Phinney, 1992). For example, Helms (1995) and Cross (1995) studied the racial identity development of college students in late adolescents. They identified three phases of racial identity: (1) personal identity, (2) reference group orientation, (3) ascribed identity. These three phases are similar to Marcia’s description of adolescent identity. These phases are considered static in that the individual moves through the three stages and have a new
single identity; however, this is opposite of a dynamic or fluid identity wherein one negotiates and renegotiates their identity depending on multiple dimensions of their identity and contextual influences.

**Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity**

The static definitions of identity that essentialized the concept and assumed a linear development have been challenged by various scholars. Researchers are realizing the unique identity paths some individuals go through as a result of their experiences. For example, Jewish Americans have distinctive identity construction developments due to their own experiences of discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying, similar to that of Muslim Arabs (Moore 1986; Williams & Vashi, 2007). Moreover, Jewish Americans have to negotiate and renegotiate their standing in society due to contextual factors, such as sociocultural conditions. Additionally, identity theory recognizes three categories in the construction of one’s identity: (1) personal identities, (2) role identities, and (3) social identities (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Personal identities are attributes such as personality and physical elements that an individual recognizes and defines themselves as. The second category of identities is role identities, which are relational. An individual constructs their identity by recognizing the many roles they play (e.g. mother, daughter, sister, and student) and what it means to them to play this role. They must reflect and ask themselves what it means to play this role. The last identity category is social identities. Social identities refers to being a member of a label, such as Palestinian, American, Muslim, or female. Again, the emphasis is on the reflection of the individual and the meaning they assign to what it means to them to be a part of this social identity. Moreover, another theory that recognizes the multifaceted nature of identity construction is identity control theory (ICT). ICT is similar to identity theory except it takes it one step further and tries to understand the relationship between the different categories of identities. Finally, social identity theory also recognizes the
fluidity of identity construction but the focus is on intergroup relations, which is an understanding of one’s self based on an individual’s standing within a social group (Deaux, 1993; Stryker & Burke, 1995). Following current definitions, identity in this study is defined as the intersectionality of one’s core identity and other dimensions of identity that can influence one’s core identity. Moreover, contextual factors are also taken into consideration as they influence how an individual constructs their identity. Finally, there is a meaning-making component that also impacts how the participants in this study make sense of their experiences (Abes et al., 2007). For the purpose of this study, Abes et al.’s model (2007; McEwen & Jones, 2000) is used as the core theoretical framework. This models extends the definition of identity to include multiple dimensions of identity such as race, culture, class, religion, gender, and sexual orientation in relation to one’s core identity. Moreover, the model accounts for contextual factors, such as family background, sociocultural conditions, current experiences, and career decisions and life planning and the influence these factors, have over one’s identity development. Finally, the way an individual makes sense of contextual factors impacts their identity construction and this is the “meaning-making” component of their identity construction (Abes et al., 2007).

**McEwen and Jones (2000) Original Model**

In response to the models of identity, which were static and where identity creation and development were linear progressions through stages, models that did not seem to reflect and respond to the challenges of real life, McEwen and Jones (2000) approached the research in a different way.

McEwen and Jones examined the identity development of 10 female undergraduate students between the ages of 20 and 24 (late adolescents) of various ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds. They created a model of multiple dimensions of identity as depicted in Figure 2-1.
At the center of the model lies an individual’s inner self or core, comprised of what an individual protects and values the most. The core constitutes personal attributes, characteristics and the individual’s concept of their personal identities. Right outside of the core are dimensions of identity, which include religion, culture, race, class, sexual orientation, and gender. In Figure 2-1, the dimensions revolve around the core on elliptical orbits, much like planets around the sun, indicating both the strong relationship between these dimensions and the core as well as the constant fluidity of their position in relation to the core through time. According to this visualization, the proximity of these dimensions to the core corresponds to the “gravitational” influence they have, what Jones and McEwen call “saliency” in the intersecting circles on Figure 2-1. Additionally, the proximity of the dots or the identity dimensions to the core represents the saliency one aspect of an individual’s identity has at one point in time over another. Saliency is referred to as the importance an individual places on one dimension over another based on their experiences with that dimension. The saliency of the dimensions of identity are dependent on contextual factors such as family background, sociocultural conditions, current experiences, and career decisions and life planning (Abes et al., 2007).

In one study of 14 Muslim-American college students in late adolescence, Farouk Dey (2012) adopted this model to understand the identity development of Muslims on a college campus. He found that identity dimensions such as race, tradition, religion, gender, family, and language are more salient among minority groups, such as Muslim college students, than the majority group because “they represent the basis for their subordinate standing in the community” (Dey, 2012). Through interactions with non-Muslim peers and involvement in religious organizations, Dey found the religious identities of the participants were constantly in question; therefore, their religious identity was most salient to their identity construction. Dey
(2012) found the majority of the Muslim college students he studied come to campus reluctant to identity as Muslim because of previous experiences. One common experience was fear of being judged by other Muslims. This was particularly true of the females he studied. Females who did not wear the hijab worried that other Muslims would judge them for not wearing the hijab so they found it easiest not to disclose their Muslim identity. The second common experience was fear of being the target of continued harassment. Almost all 14 participants shared incidents of prejudice and discrimination at their American middle and public high schools (Dey, 2012). The participants worried that if they expressed their Muslim identity, they would face incidents of prejudice and discrimination in college. Dey (2012) could not have understood the complexity of the multiple dimensions that influenced his participants without looking at the data through Jones & McEwen’s (2000) model of multiple dimensions of identity. The participants in Dey’s study learned to be silent in expressing their Muslim identity at an early age so when they came to college they were reluctant to vocalize their religious identity. Dey had to examine the contextual factors that influenced the way the Muslim students chose to express their multiple identities on their college campus.

Similarly, Toni Cerbo (2010) used the model to understand the identity experiences of seven Muslim undergraduate women in late adolescence. Based on her use of the Jones and McEwen (2000) model, she found that identity is fluid and dynamic, identity is multifaceted, and identity is understood through a religious interpretative lens (Cerbo, 2010). The participants shared the incidents of discrimination they faced on their college campus. Cerbo (2010) examined the way in which the girls confronted issues of racism on campus, and she found that the participants responded in three ways: (1) submitting to the mistreatment, (2) refuting misconceptions of their Muslim identity, or (3) trying to educate others. In terms of identity
construction and the model of multiple dimensions of identity, Cerbo (2010) found that the girls’ religious identity was most salient and the closest to their core identity because that was the dimension of their identity where they faced the most difference.

![Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity](image)

Figure 2-1. Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity [Reprinted from Jones & McEwen (2000) as cited in (Jones & McEwen, 2000)]

**Current Model**

In 2007, Abes et al. extended the previous model to include a meaning-making filter. This is important because the way an individual makes sense of their experiences and the
contextual factors that impact their understanding of life experiences has an influence over their identity construction.

Figure 2-2. Reconceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007)

As the researchers reviewed the narratives of the 10 lesbian late-adolescent college females, they found significant variation in the ways the individual participant interpreted how contextual factors can influence one’s identity—a filtering process they dubbed “meaning-making capacity: meaning-making capacity served as a filter through which contextual factors are interpreted prior to influencing self-perceptions of sexual orientation identity and its relationship with other identity dimensions. How context influenced these perceptions depended on the complexity of the meaning-making filter” (Abes et al., 2007, p. 6). There were three levels: formulaic, transitional, and foundational. In a formulaic interpretation, not much filtering occurs, which means individuals fail to see relationships between their multiple identity dimensions. For example, an individual may not see a connection between their sexual
orientation and social class; rather, they may see these two dimensions each as separate entities that fail to influence the other. One participant who demonstrated a formulaic interpretation of meaning-making believed all lesbians were poor (Abes et al., 2007). This shows that this participant failed to understand the relationship that sexual orientation might have with social class and the fluid nature or continuum of lesbians of varying social classes. This participant accepted stereotypes others had of social groups, such as lesbians.

At the transitional level of meaning-making capacity, individuals adopt aspects of formulaic and foundational ways of interpreting contextual influences. For instance, transitional individuals acknowledge the incongruity identity labels and stereotypes have with personal identity dimensions; however, they fail to move beyond that initial observation. In the example of the formulaic participant who accepted stereotypes and believed lesbians cannot achieve upper-class economic status, a transitional individual would have doubts about this stereotype but would behave in ways that accepted the stereotype because they are comfortable in doing so.

At the foundational level, individuals were able to clearly see the intersecting relationships between context and perceptions of identity. Additionally, “these women were adept at resisting stereotypes and typically presented their identity in a consistent manner regardless of the environment” (Abes et al., 2007). To follow the example above, a foundational individual would understand that lesbians can achieve all kinds of social class status regardless of the stereotype about lesbians being of low socioeconomic status. The researchers also found that the participants in the study with the most complex meaning-making scope were able to filter or dissect how contextual influences impacted their individual identity. In terms of the model, a foundational meaning-making individual would be represented with a thick filter or circle and narrow grid lines.
The circle represents the filtering of contextual factors. The thickness of this filter as well as the width of the grid pattern depends on the complexity with which an individual interprets contextual factors in relation to their core or inner self. That is, one’s meaning-making filter can range from complex to simple. For example, in a complex meaning-making capacity, the circle would be thick with narrow grid lines while a shallow circle and wide grid openings would represent a superficial meaning-making capacity. In terms of the levels of meaning-making, a formulaic meaning-making capacity would be represented with a shallow filter with wide grid openings; a transitional meaning-making capacity would be represented with a medium thick filter with somewhat narrow grid openings; and a foundational meaning-making individual would be represented with a thick filter or circle and narrow grid lines.

The current study draws from the sociocultural conceptualization of identities as multiple and dynamic (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000). When identities are looked at through a dynamic lens, scholars such as Abes et al. (2007) now hypothesize that identities are constantly in flux, changing over time and in response to specific contexts. Individuals go back and forth in understanding their identities rather than progressing through a linear and predictable cycle of identity development as had been the generally accepted theory in the past (Butler, 1995; Cass, 1979; Cross, 1995; Helms, 1995; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Ossana et al., 1992; Phinney, 1992). Building on this dynamic model of identity, the present study conceptualizes the multiplicity and complexity of identity. Rather than one single—albeit fluid—identity, this study posits that individuals construct multi-faceted identities over their lifetime, with each aspect of one’s identity becoming more salient at times in response to specific contexts. This fluid, faceted identity may change and be re-constructed many times over the course of one’s lifespan.
Identity and Palestinian Adolescents in the United States

The literature related to Palestinians living in the United States is limited; however, there have been a handful of studies that have explored at least one dimension of identity development for this population. Using the McEwen and Jones (2000) model as a guide, the discussion below reviews current empirical research on identity and Arabs or Palestinians in the United States with a focus on school-age children. The following section organizes the literature into three sections based on the identity model outlined above: (1) core, (2) identity dimensions, and (3) contextual factors.

Core

The core is the central piece of the model. It represents an individual’s personal attributes, characteristics, and concept of personal identity. The literature primarily emphasizes one of the most obvious characteristics: physical features. How one looks was associated with a specific physical stereotype and that played a role in how second generation adolescents defined themselves. For example, second generation Iranian students said they felt American in every way; however, when others saw them they were immediately tagged as being non-American or Middle Eastern or some other nationality because of their skin tone, hair shade, and eye color. Their physiology differed with the typical American stereotype of having white skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes (Daha, 2011). The adolescents in Daha’s study emphasized that although they were technically American because they were born here, based on how others reacted to them, they knew they were not because of their physical features and names (2011). In a study by Aoudé (2001), participants expressed grief at being profiled at the airport, while one participant recounted someone asking them when the next bombing was going to be.

Likewise, people who look a certain way, though they were born and raised in the United States, are still perceived as immigrants (Aoudé, 2001; Nadal, Griffin, Hamit, Leon, & Tobio,
For example, one of the participants in Nadal et al.’s (2012) study recalled being asked by others where he is from. This incident conveys the idea that there is a prescribed way of looking American (Nadal et al., 2012). The idea of “passing” is also discussed in relation to physical appearance and racism. “Passing” refers to when an individual can appear to be a member of the majority culture. These individuals can actually experience more acts of racism as a result: the aggressors assume the “passer” will not be offended by the remarks because it doesn’t apply to them (Nadal et al., 2012).

**Identity Dimensions**

Based on Abes et al.’s (2007) model, the dimensions of identity are sexual orientation, race, culture, gender, class, and religion. In the literature on Arab Americans, religion, gender, language, culture, and social class have been identified as the key parts of identity development.

**Religion.** A study of seven Muslim female students in late adolescence found that during the most crucial times of understanding one’s self, the participants in this study were constantly bombarded with challenges to their religious identity (Cerbo, 2010). The study found the girls responded either by submitting to the mistreatment or by refuting misconceptions and perceptions of their religious identity or trying to educate others (Cerbo, 2010).

Furthermore, in a study by Dey (2012) of 14 Muslim late adolescent students, religion was found to be the most salient aspect of identity formation. The participants believed that religion was at the forefront in every aspect of their lives: “[r]eligion for these students is more than a spiritual practice, it is a way of life that ultimately impacts all other aspects of their lives, including their values, daily activities, relationship with others, life and career goals, and academic success” (Dey, 2012). The participants discussed the added difficulty the American school system places on practicing one’s religion. For example, almost all the participants cited
struggling to deal with peer pressure to join in activities, such as eating pork, drinking alcohol, and dating others on campus.

Nadal et al. (2012) interviewed 10 Muslim and Arab undergraduates about racism they may have faced while living in the United States. He found that many of the participants experienced increased acts of racism towards them after September 11th. The authors attributed the “microaggressions” or subtle acts of racism the participants described to “endorsing religious stereotypes of Muslims as terrorists” (Nadal et al., 2012). In other words, non-Muslims believe Muslim people have something to do with terrorism at any capacity simply because they practice the same religion. Another theme of the racial microaggressions mentioned was the “assumption of religious homogeneity” (Nadal et al., 2012). Microaggressions occur as a result of the non-Muslims’ belief that everyone acts the same way under their faith. For instance, one of the participants has frequently been asked if he really prays five times a day. In the interview he expressed his frustration that others can’t see that there are ranges of devotedness in the Muslim faith just like in the Christian faith (Nadal et al., 2012).

A study by Witteborn (2007) reaffirmed the intersection between ethnicity and religion: the participants avoided identifying as Arab because their Christian identity was lost in their Arab one. Despite this perceived sublimation of religious identity to ethnicity or “race,” Christians in the study still identified more with a Western identity rather than with an Eastern one. Christian Arabs have an easier time acculturating to U.S. culture (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Nadal et al., 2012; Witteborn, 2007). Arab Christians have an easier time acculturating into U.S. society because they, “do not seem to be confronted as much with challenging situations in which their religious/spiritual identity is challenged” (Witteborn, 2007, p. 565). Nadal et al. (2012) refer to this phenomenon as “passing”.
Ajrouch and Jamal (2007) conducted a study wherein they investigated how Arab Americans identify themselves on the United States Census and how this relates to their assimilation into U.S. culture. They looked at 115,284 questionnaires from the 2000 U.S. Census, mainly from the Detroit, Michigan, area. Detroit is home to the highest concentration of Arab Americans living in the United States (AAIF, 2012). They also conducted 1,016 face-to-face interviews. One of their findings was that Lebanese and Syrian Christians are more likely to identify as White. The researchers attribute this to their Christian religion and their White features; moreover, that group has a long history of migration to the U.S. They also found that Muslims were more likely to identify as “other” on the questionnaire than Christians. They also make note of important factors such as class, residence, and education in the formulation of identifying White. They found that households with a high socioeconomic status (SES), long residence (in the U.S.), and college degrees are more likely to identify as White. They also found that Arab households with strong ties to their ethnic origin also identify as White. They found that many households who failed to personally identify as White did so anyways because they did not agree with the “minority status” associated with identifying as “other” on the census. Many felt “the pan-ethnic label serves as an anchor, impeding their upward mobility toward whiteness” (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007, p. 874).

The participants in Abu El-Haj’s (2007) study held diverse ideas on what it means to be Palestinian and, often, it intersected with their religion. All the participants in her study were Palestinian Muslims. In group interviews, all the participants agreed praying and celebrating Eid were important parts of identifying as a Palestinian (Abu El-Haj, 2007).

Gender. Several studies have shown that identity formation differs according to gender: participants place greater value in certain aspects of identity, and have different experiences and
interactions according to their gender. In a 1988 study by Ahed, the women interviewed discussed the importance of hanging Palestinian artifacts related to the occupation around the home. They felt a sense of duty to preserve Palestinian traditions and to instill a feeling of nationalism within their children (Ahed, 1988). Ahed (1988) in her study of Palestinian women finds that nationalism is part of Palestinian identity. One way of preserving identity is to continually remind each other about life under the occupation. Additionally, for those Palestinians who are living in the Diaspora, they felt they must remember how lucky they are to be living outside a state of war, but simultaneously support family that is still living in the territories, either financially or through other means (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Ghanem-Ybarras, 2002).

Another key aspect of Arab-Muslim gender identity is dress; as articles of clothing are external visual markers of identity, dress is also one of the incentives for microaggressions. One of the participants relayed a time when she was walking with her mother who wears the hijab (head covering). A truck driver circled around them in his car and shouted to them. He asked them to say hi to Osama (referring to Osama bin Laden) for him. In a state of shock, her mother replied that she would (Nadal et al., 2012).

These microaggressions fall within the theme of “pathology of the Muslim religion” which refers to non-Muslims’ beliefs that there is something inherently wrong with the Muslim faith, which leads to “behaviors that convey punishment, judgment, or maltreatment” (Nadal et al., 2012, p. 24). This is especially true for the hijab-wearing participants. The women related the stares they receive everywhere they go. One participant was asked by a man if she felt hot “in that thing,” referring to her hijab. She told him to go ask the nuns (Nadal, et al., 2012, p. 24).

Another theme, mentioned before, which has a strong bearing on gender identity, is the “assumption of religious homogeneity”—the belief that everyone is the same within the faith
(Nadal et al., 2012). For example, a White Moroccan Muslim who wears *hijab* was asked by people why she covers her hair if she is White. She felt frustrated that people could not differentiate between race, ethnicity, and religion (Nadal et al., 2012).

However, while participants in Abu El-Haj’s (2007) study all agreed being Muslim was part of a Palestinian identity, they disagreed to what extent they should be strict adherents to Muslim tradition. On this issue, the boys differed from the girls, and even the girls disagreed with other girls. For example, on the issue of wearing the *hijab*, the Palestinian boys felt it was important for the girls to wear it. Some of the girls felt the same way; however, some of the girls differed in their opinions. They felt it was not an important component of being a Muslim Palestinian (Abu El-Haj, 2007).

Similarly, Cainkar (1998) relates the challenging role Palestinian women have of upholding the Palestinian culture for their second-generation children: “[w]ithout a female component a cultural system cannot be reproduced” (p. 17). She finds that the Palestinian women in her study feel and are looked to as the pillars of Palestinian culture. Beyond the sheer biological reason—they are giving birth to a nation of Palestinians—it is also their sole responsibility to make sure they raise their children with a strong sense of their native identity. One important aspect of this is for the children to speak Arabic (Cainkar, 1988).

**Language.** Although language was not a dimension of identity recognized in Abes et al.’s Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Identity (2007), it is a salient point mentioned throughout the literature. Related to the idea of marriage and cultural maintenance, the decisions parents make inside the home contribute to the upbringing and identity formation of their children, impacting their cultural identity. One of these decisions is that of language (Ahed, 1988; Aoudé, 2001). Palestinian parents in Aoudé’s (2001) study emphasized the importance of
speaking Arabic at home for the sake of their children’s cultural identity (p. 160). They believe that maintaining the native language is a defining factor in shaping one’s identity. They also encouraged watching Arabic television to enforce this idea as well. On the flip side, in Baez’s (2002) study of a Puerto Rican family, he traces the mother’s decisions to only speak English at home so that they can more easily assimilate into American culture. The children in the study succeed in assimilation; however, it is to the detriment of their native language. Ahed (1988) in her study of Palestinian women finds that nationalism is a powerful part of Palestinian identity. She found that her Palestinian participants insisted that their offspring speak Arabic as a means of maintaining their cultural heritage.

Similarly, Hinton (2001) recognized this phenomenon in her linguistic interviews with Asian participants. One student participant reveals the ridicule she received from family members when she attempted to speak her native language:

[O]ne of the bad experiences that I have encountered was when my family and I went over to Hong Kong and Macao to visit relatives. Naturally, I had to speak Chinese throughout the entire visit. My aunts and uncles soon found me to be a great form of entertainment because my Chinese sounded so funny to them. To them I was their niece, the ‘toa-gee,’ which simply means that I was born in America or they would get really creative and call me an ‘A-B-C’ which is an acronym for ‘American-Born-Chinese. (p. 230)

Another participant took a more pragmatic outlook:

I am more fluent in English than in Taiwanese. My other dialect, Mandarin, is almost nonexistent. A part of me wants to keep my language alive, but a big part of me wonders if it really matters. I am sure I’ll be living in America for the rest of my life. I guess I just don’t really care. (2001, p. 230)

Evidently, for many individuals, language is considered an important factor in how an individual defines himself or herself culturally.

In DeCapua and Wintergerst’s (2009) study of a German family, she concluded that factors such as “language use, family, school, and social support networks, issues of ethnic and
social identity, and the prestige value of language” (p. 6) relates to how successfully an individual maintains their first language. Regardless of how determined the German parents in this study were in maintaining their children’s first language, the researcher found that factors outside of the parents’ control proved to be significant deterrents.

Finally, in Bosher’s (1997) study of Hmong postsecondary students, she found that while conversational language use among the second-generation Hmong students was strong, they lacked in academic proficiency. Moreover, the students lamented at the fact that they were not as strong in their native Hmong language as they were in English. The students believed that language maintenance was an important factor in maintaining Hmong identity; however, it was not at the core of identifying as Hmong.

Social class. Another important factor influencing Arab American identity is social class. Upper class Muslim Americans represent 43% of the U.S. population, which is one percent higher than the United States at large (Pew Research Center, 2018). Foreign-born Muslims or the parents of second generation Muslims such as the participants in this study (38%) are more likely to hold a college degree than American Muslims (31%). In the past, America has attracted affluent and highly educated Muslim immigrants. Their success was mainly due to high societal and family expectations and an accepting and tolerant U.S. environment; however, this changed after September 11th, 2001 (Pipes & Duran, 2002). As a result of high societal and family expectations, Muslim-American young adults hold careers in high earning fields such as medicine and engineering. In fact, one third of the Muslim-American community hold careers in medicine and engineering (Pipes & Duran, 2002). However, due to recent sociopolitical conditions, the environment for Muslim Americans has changed and they have the responsibility of constructing their identity in an environment that has become hostile towards them (Abdo,
Muslim Americans have to learn how to balance the expectations of society and family as well as their own in the face of a changing world.

Palestinian participants in Aoudé’s study living in Ecuador were affluent; therefore, they had the financial means to visit the homeland. They also had the means for technology to help them stay in touch with their relatives. Moreover, their financial security afforded them the leisure time to stay abreast of current politics and to support Arab politicians, allowing them to influence Arab politics as a result (Aoudé, 2001). Therefore, we must not ignore the influence social class has on maintaining one’s cultural heritage.

Similarly, Centrie (2004) highlights how the parents of Vietnamese immigrant children fought to regain the status they had in Vietnam by working, saving, and encouraging their children to be academically successful. Similarly, in Li’s (2003) study of Chinese immigrants, the parents stressed the importance of school; however, they themselves spent most of their time in the restaurant, limiting their direct involvement in the children’s education. They were also often limited by their own lack of formal schooling. They did not usually have a degree past middle and high school (Li, 2003).

**Contextual Factors**

The model discusses contextual factors as influences coming from family background, sociocultural conditions, current experiences, career decisions, and life planning. A review of the literature reveals that contextual factors, such as community and sense of belonging, marriage, school, environment, family, media, politics, and technology, influence Arab American identity construction.

**Community and sense of belonging.** One facet of cultural maintenance is community. Palestinians who choose to live in Arab communities are more likely to maintain their cultural heritage. They are more able to visit one another and observe “Palestinian Arab customs and
traditions” (Aoudé, 2001, p.153). Cousin Jay in Aoudé’s study lived in an Arab neighborhood once he was married to a Palestinian woman and he attributed this to keeping him close to his roots (2001). Palestinian immigrants living in Ecuador in close proximity to one another were also able to maintain their cultural heritage for this same reason (Aoudé, 2001).

Palestinians maintain their identity while living in the Diaspora through visitations to the home country, Palestine or the occupied territories of Palestine, like the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. They also maintain their identity through interactions with and especially visits to other Palestinian homes in the Diaspora. For example, Palestinians living in the Diaspora who visit their homeland stay aware of the politics and the way of life for Palestinians living in Palestine (Aoudé, 2001). Also, Palestinians who come from the occupied territories and other parts of the globe to visit Palestinians living in the Diaspora keep the struggle of their ancestors alive. Their presence and the stories they share of life under the occupation serve as a constant reminder of the homeland (Aoudé, 2001; Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997). Also, many Palestinians whose lives have been uprooted more than once tell their stories, and these stories also serve as reminders of the difficulties they face finding employment in the homeland due to the economic and political strife that plagues the country (Aoudé, 2001).

Technology. Additionally, technology plays a special part in the maintenance of the native heritage. Aoudé (2001) reveals that the participants in his study phoned and used online mediums to keep in close contact with Palestinian relatives across the globe. Many of them admitted to contacting their relatives every day through the use of technology.

Finally, there fails to be extensive research on the role social network services (SNS) have on identity formation, preservation, or degree of identity continuance. Researchers Boyd and Ellison (2008) define a SNS as,
Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. (p. 211)

The research related to SNSs focuses on defining cyber terms, how young people (teenagers and college students) make use of the sites, safety rules while on sites, and comparison of various SNSs such as Facebook, Myspace, Bebo, Cyworld, and LinkedIn. However, regarding SNSs and Arabs, there has been research related to the effects SNSs have on the revolution in the Middle East (Mansour, 2012; Miladi, 2016). Additionally, there are studies that share how adolescents and late adolescents express themselves differently and for specific purposes through SNSs compared to in person (Molaei, 2017; Suler, 2004). There has also been research related to monitoring Arab politics through SNSs (Ndubisi, Nataraajan, & Al-Jabri, 2015). However, SNSs needs to be further researched as they relate to identity. Additionally, national identity is part of the identity formation process, such as the recent “Arab Spring,” as it is referred to in the media, and its effects on identity formation needs to be assessed.

**Marriage.** For Palestinians, an important way to increase their attachment to the homeland and their sense of native identity is through marriage. Another facet of identifying as Palestinian while living in the Diaspora is possession of a strong sense of attachment to the homeland and native identity (Saffron, 1991). In order for this occur, there are life decisions and daily interactions people take that reaffirm and maintain their native identity (Aoudé, 2001). Palestinians living outside of Palestine who marry other Palestinians preserve and reinforce self-identification as Palestinian (Aoudé, 2001). In Aoudé’s research, he traces the history of his Palestinian family and friends and investigates the ways in which his family members maintain their Palestinian identity while living in the Diaspora. He posits marriage as one of the major factors in this maintenance. He profiles his cousin Jay, who was born in the United States and
mainly identified as American, but who changed due to his marriage to a Palestinian Arab woman. Conversely, he also profiles his Palestinian friend who used to live in Australia with her family as having assimilated to American culture due to her marriage to an American and her new residence in the United States, away from her family in Australia. She is less connected and concerned with her Palestinian identity as she is with the American part of her life (Aoudé, 2001, p. 160). This follows the model of multiple dimensions of identity in that for some of the participants in Aoudé’s (2001) study, the saliency of their group identification differed based on a contextual factor such as marriage.

**Family.** Another dimension of identity construction for second-generation adolescents is the influence of family. In a study of 101 postsecondary Hmong children of recent immigrants to the United States, Bosher (2013) found that influence of family was the strongest contextual factor in identity construction. In all cases, family was credited as being the root of success in navigating a bicultural world. Many students felt their strictly traditional upbringing gave them structure and helped them focus on important things like education (Bosher, 2013). For example, many of the students experienced stress and conflict surrounding dating. Traditional Hmong families discouraged dating, especially for the females in the family; however, the children found no harm in dating and they wanted to date (Bosher, 2013). Also, in a study of 217 Chinese-American and Chinese-Australian immigrants, researchers found that the parenting techniques of Chinese parents impacted the adolescents’ pride in their ethnic heritage (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992).

Moreover, in Daha’s (2011) study of 55 second generation Iranian Americans, 98% of the adolescents believed family connectedness was extremely valuable. For example, they believed that non-Iranian families or American families do not respect their families. When they
were asked how they know this, they said that non-Iranian families do not listen to their parents and they place their grandparents in homes (Daha, 2011). A tight-knit and respectful family structure, therefore, contributed to these participants’ sense of right and wrong, and of course, in their formation of identity.

School. The original model does not address school as a salient factor for identity formation; however, school was an element that came out of the literature regarding second generation adolescents. In terms of Arab education, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 89% of Arabs in the United States hold a high school diploma. Forty-five percent of them possess a bachelor’s degree, as opposed to the national average of 28%. Additionally, 18% of Americans with Arab ancestry hold a graduate degree, which is 8% higher than the national average (AAIF, 2012). The U.S. census statistics are misleading: they suggest Arabs are faring well in the United States and do not need additional funding for programs or research. However, as stated earlier, there are issues related to identifying Arabs in the United States. On the U.S. census, Arabs are considered White. Also, many Arabs are wary of professing Arab ancestry on the census form. Additionally, even if Arabs were counted as such on the census forms, the term Arab in and of itself is misleading. It suggests uniformity in culture, race, and ethnicity across nationalities.

It is even more difficult to accurately identify Palestinians in the United States. Palestinians have gained citizenship and national rights from the countries in which they reside, and consequently, their offspring identify themselves as citizens of these nations (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007). Abu El Haj’s (2007) study adds that school districts fail to keep statistics on Arab students. However, she finds that they are the largest population of students in the district where she performed her research, Detroit, Michigan. She also found they were the group that was struggling the most in terms of discipline and academics (Abu El-Haj, 2007). Moreover, through
the literature, contextual factors such as school environment, educators, and curriculum all play a role in how Palestinians saw themselves in terms of academics.

**Educators.** Many educators “fail to see anti-Arab racism as a problem” (Wingfield & Karaman, 2000, p. 4). Some educators perpetuate these negative images: for example, Nadal et al. (2012) reported one participant being angry when his seventh-grade teacher called him Osama bin Laden jokingly throughout the school year. As a result, his classmates also ridiculed him, and the bullying grew worse after September 11.

Since the bombing of the twin towers on September 11, 2001, the United States was divided into two time periods: pre-September 11 and post-September 11. After the attacks on the World Trade Center, there were increased acts of racism towards Arabs (ADC, 2003; Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Nadal et al., 2012). Former President Bush’s comment to Congress nine days after the attacks most vividly defines the climate in the United States after September 11th: “you are either with us, or you are with the terrorists” (Bush, 2001). Abu El-Haj discusses the changed climate of Regional High School, the school in which she conducted her research,

[i]mportantly, after September 11, schools across the nation participated in generating a resurgence of nationalist and patriotic sentiment. Regional High was implicated in other ways in the production of patriotism, nationalism, and ideological compliance with U.S. policies, particularly by encouraging students to support the military and the war in Iraq. For example, posters in the hall displayed pictures of former students serving in Iraq and asked students to make contributions to send them provisions. Some teachers asked students to buy yellow ribbons in support of the war. (2007, p. 307)

While many of the students in Abu El-Haj’s (2007) study identified as being American, they struggled with supporting a war that killed other Arabs. The students also struggled with one of the new school regulations requiring students to stand for the pledge. While some of the Palestinians chose to stand for the pledge, some did not. These students felt they could not support the U.S.’s foreign policies, including the U.S. support for Israel in its occupation of
Palestinian territory. They also could not support a country that indiscriminately perceived them as terrorists. Their conscientious objection caused a backlash: one of the students discussed how he felt slighted when one of his own teachers told him he should return to his home country because he refused to stand for the pledge of allegiance (Abu El-Haj, 2007).

**Curriculum.** The concept of Arab identity, let alone Palestinian identity, fails to be recognized in the current American public school system; moreover, when Arabs are mentioned, it is usually not in a positive light (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Wingfield & Karaman, 2000). For example, in an ethnographic study conducted over a period of almost four years, Abu El-Haj (2007) followed a group of Palestinian teenagers and how they navigated their way through the American public school system. Through participant observation and group interviews, the researcher found “through everyday discourse…inside their schools and communities, Palestinian youth experience their positioning as outside the ‘imagined community’ of the U.S. nation, framing them as ‘enemies within’” (Abu El-Haj, 2007). She also found that the Palestinian students at the school are one of the groups of students most frequently sent to the Dean’s office, given referrals, expelled, and suspended from school due to their behavior. This brought Abu El-Haj and her researchers to explore why this was the case at this school. She found the youth were misunderstood. For example, one student explains why she was sent out of her social studies class for her behavior: she was upset that the teacher failed to recognize the presence of the Palestinian territories on the map of Israel that the teacher was showing to the class. The student lashed out and shouted, “[I]look, I came from Palestine, and you’re saying it’s not a thing. Then you need to tell me, where did I come from?” (Abu El-Haj, 2007).

Additionally, the research available for educators of Arab students only discusses the language differences between English and Arabic and how to aid Arabic speakers who are ELLs
to speak better English (Palmer, El-Ashry, Leclere, & Chang, 2007). The research available fails to address how to fight anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiments at school. Wingfield and Karaman (2000) confirm, “American textbooks are often Eurocentric, while Arab points of view regarding such issues as the nationalization of resources or the Arab-Israeli conflict are presented inadequately or not at all” (p. 7).

Environment. Just as it did in society and politics at large, the climate of anti-Arab sentiments in schools has increased since the United States went to war with Arab-Muslim nations—beginning with the Gulf War in 1990, the Afghanistan Wars in 2001 and 2015, the Iraq War in 2003, the Pakistan War in 2004, the Libyan Civil War in 2011, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant War in 2014—which naturally also further alienated Arab students (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Wingfield & Karaman, 2000). For example, Abu El-Haj (2007) relates how the school climate transformed after the war with Iraq began in March of 2003:

> although these teachers were important allies for Palestinian students, they could not shield these students from a school climate in which they were positioned as not belonging to this nation, even as these students were called upon to participate in exercises signaling patriotic commitment to the United States. (p. 307)

As a result, this stereotyping has caused many students to be ashamed and quarrelsome because they do not feel validated in the current school system (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Dwairy, 2006; Tatum, 1997; Wingfield & Karaman, 2000). Wingfield and Karaman (2000) state, “caught in this spiral, Arab American students may begin to believe that they, as a people, are inferior. They may stop trying to do their best and become convinced that they can never amount to anything” (p. 7). Research reveals that by validating students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds within our schools, students will possess a positive sense of self and feel invested in school (Banks, 2007; Cummins, 2001; Wingfield & Karaman, 2000). Furthermore, Driscoll and Wierzbicki (2012) have researched the reasons for depression amongst Palestinian Muslims and
they find that a loss of one’s cultural heritage leads to interpersonal conflict with family members, which leads to increased depression. Finally, “leaders in school systems…must be aware of the ways that Muslim young people are discriminated against, both blatantly and subtly, and how such messages impact their identities and development” (Nadal et al., 2012, p. 31).

Throughout these narratives, the communities and the parents of these immigrant children profess to valuing education. They desire for their children to do well in the American school system. Similarly, the school systems wanted for their students to perform well. However, throughout each of the research studies outlined above, the communities and the school systems talked past each other. For example, Fu (1995) mentions how the Savang parents perceived education as a means of improving their socioeconomic status. They wished for their children to do well in school so that they could fare well in life. However, the schools failed to properly assess the literacy level of the Savang children and placed them in classrooms that failed to adequately prepare them (Fu, 1995). Similarly, the children in Li’s (2003) ethnography of a Chinese family in Canada revealed the children were misplaced in the school system. The failure of the youngest girl to speak English to the teacher’s standards and the aggression of the youngest boy in the family prompted the school system to recommend that the children be placed in special education classrooms (Li, 2003).

In the face of this discrimination, it is encouraged for educators to create safe spaces wherein students of similar ethnic and racial backgrounds can get together to discuss the racist environment in which they live (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Baskin, Wampold, Quintana, & Enright, 2010; Tatum, 1997). In Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria, Tatum (1997) emphasizes the need for students of the same racial and or ethnic background to gather together and de-stress from the discrimination they face on a daily basis. Creating support groups
is a healthy way for students to console one another and discuss issues relevant to their situation (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Tatum, 1997).

In addition to discrimination based on perceived patriotism or language barriers, second generation Iranian adolescents faced discrimination over their non-American sounding names (Daha, 2011). Teachers had trouble pronouncing those names and students made fun of them; therefore, it served as a daily reminder that they were not 100% American or fully accepted into American society. In the end, the majority of the participants interviewed (55 students) adopted more American sounding names in order to avoid the stereotyping and bullying they faced from their peers.

Summary

This chapter has sought to show and describe the research and knowledge this study contributes to through use of Abes, Jones, and McEwen’s model (2007). The foundational principle of this present research, as the model emphasizes, is identity construction is impacted by multiple dimensions and contextual factors of identity that needs to be considered in understanding the identity construction of second generation Palestinian-American Muslim female adolescents. Identity in this framework is described as fluid and multifaceted. Individuals must negotiate and renegotiate their identities depending on multiple identity dimensions and contextual factors that impact their identity construction. From the research on Palestinians through the lens of Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007), we learn that there are various dimensions of identity that become more or less salient depending on contextual factors. Finally, depending on an individual’s meaning-making filter, their experiences can be interpreted in various ways that impacts their identity construction.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This study sought to understand how second-generation Palestinian-American Muslim female adolescent students construct their identities while simultaneously trying to understand how they do so in the context of their school life. In this chapter, I provide an outline of the methodology, including the research paradigm, research design, data collection processes, data collection procedures, data analysis, quality of the study, and study limitations. First is an outline of the research design paradigm, which will shed light on these research questions.

Research Paradigm

This research study followed a constructivist paradigm that assumed a world where universal or absolute realities cannot be known; thus, the focus was on understanding individual perspectives or constructions of reality. Constructivist researchers believe that multiple realities exist and these realities “are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points” (Hatch, 2002, p. 15). Realities are “abstract mental constructions that are experientially based, local, and specific” (Hatch, 2002, p. 15). The epistemology of constructivism is that the research participants and I co-constructed truth and understanding together (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Crotty, 2011; Hatch, 2002).

Specifically, the constructivist approach informed this study because it is based on the notion that identities are dynamic and multidimensional. Specifically, this research sought to follow the constructivist approach to identities, finding them dynamic and multidimensional. Constructivist researchers believe it is important to understand the full context in which an individual lives. This includes understanding the contextual factors that influence one’s identity development. One of the research questions driving the present study sought to understand the role the context of school plays in identity construction for Palestinian-Muslim American female
adolescent students. School was particularly chosen because adolescence is a prime time wherein identity construction begins and school is a place where adolescents receive messages from peers about who they are (Cerbo, 2010).

**Research Design**

This study was a descriptive case study, first because it sought to describe a phenomenon and the context in which it occurs (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Johansson, 2003). Second, a case study such as this is appropriate when context plays a significant role in the phenomenon to be studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this study, the phenomenon to be studied was how Palestinian-Muslim American female adolescent high school students constructed their identities based on contextual factors. Contextual factors such as family background, sociocultural conditions, current experiences, and career decisions and life planning have been proven to have an influence over the identity construction of other marginalized populations in Jones and McEwen’s (2000) model of multiple dimensions of identity. Case studies utilized various research methods to garner data to the point of saturation (Crotty, 2011; Glesne, 2006). The methods or products are the tools which researchers use to collect, analyze, and present data. For this study, interviews, artifact elicitation, and document analysis were used to present rich, contextual data to represent the individual participants in this study as accurately as possible.

Additionally, these tools are in line with the constructivist paradigm because they allowed for the participants to share their life experiences through answering open-ended questions as well as with artifacts that were important to them (Turan, 2010). I conducted school visits and collected documents in a non-threatening and unobtrusive way to gather more contextual data on school life for the participants. Through the school documents, I wanted to understand the culture of the schools in which the participants attended and whether or not the school culture influenced their identity construction and in what ways (Glesne, 2006). Table 3-1
below reveals the research design choices that are aligned with a constructivist research paradigm for this study.

### Table 3-1. Study Design for Identity Research on Second Generation Palestinians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontology</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Realities are constructed based on individuals and their unique experiences</td>
<td>Knowledge and meaning are created from experiences and social interaction with others and individuals construct their own truths</td>
<td>Case study or the observation of a phenomenon as told through the lens of the participant</td>
<td>In-depth interviews, artifact elicitation, and document analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection Process**

**Sampling Strategy**

I used snowball sampling during the recruitment process. Snowball sampling refers to gathering participants based on leads given provided by a current participant (Glesne, 2006, p. 35). I attempted to recruit participants through contacts at mosques, through my own professional contacts, and through contacts at various professional Arab organizations. The participants had to meet the following criteria or identify as follows: second generation, Palestinian-American, Muslim, female, adolescent, and student. Another criterion chosen was girls who do not wear the *hijab*, or head scarf. This last criterion was chosen because the data would look much differently if this aspect was not accounted for. Through the literature review, one of the dominant discourses surrounding Muslim women is their decision to wear the *hijab* and the discrimination the face as a result of their choice. The identity dimension most salient to these women was their gender and religious identity. Moreover, there is minimal literature on the experiences of Muslim females that do not wear the *hijab*. Therefore, I made the choice to pull adolescents that did not make the conscious choice to wear the *hijab* so as to understand the
identity dimensions most salient to them. Regardless, even though the participants did not wear the hijab, it came up as a result of the data. This is discussed further in chapters 4, 5, and 6. Table 3-2 reveals the avenues I utilized to conduct a snowball sampling recruitment process, as well as the contacts who were approached to help recruit participants. I left an IRB (Internal Revenue Board) consent form with these contacts so that they could share the information of the study with possible families that would be interested in participating in the study.

Table 3-2. Sampling Strategy Techniques and Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Contact(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mosque Involvement</td>
<td>Sheikhs and principals of the weekend schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Professional Contacts</td>
<td>Professor, High School Vice Principal, and Two English Language (EL) teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Arab Organizations: NAAP, AAEA, NS, and AAFS</td>
<td>Members and Henna artist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, I went to area mosques in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. I spoke with the mosque leaders, or sheikhs, and gave them a hard copy of the IRB consent form. I shared with them the purpose of the study and asked them if they knew of any young girls willing to participate. They kept a hard copy of the IRB consent form to share with members of the congregation that would be interested in the study. The sheikhs said they would contact me if they came across anyone willing to participate in the research study. The sheikhs also directed me to the principals of their weekend schools. The weekend schools were where families enroll their children to take classes in Islam and Arabic language. The sheikhs suggested I might have better luck connecting with the principals, who might be able to direct me to interested families for the study. Therefore, I emailed, texted, and visited the schools until I was able to reach the
principals of the weekend schools. I failed to hear back from any of the sheikhs or principals of the weekend schools with the exception of one principal of a private Islamic school in Wheaton, Illinois. I actually made this contact by running into the Wheaton principal at a conference held by the American Muslims for Palestine organization in November 2017. While initially this principal told me that she has some families that would be interested, when I connected with her again via text and email, she did not respond.

The second avenue of recruitment was through my professional contacts and school network. As a teacher myself, I had made connections with a Palestinian professor, a high school vice principal, and two English Language (EL) resource teachers through professional development events. I emailed all four of these contacts about my study, asked if they knew of any potential participants, and attached the IRB consent form. The professor referred me to an organization titled AAFS (Arab American Family Services) that could help me recruit families. She also posted my research study on her own Facebook page, as she works at an institution with a growing number of Arab students. However, the high school vice principal never got back to me within the time I had designated for recruitment of participants. The two EL resource teachers work with elementary and middle school students; however, one teacher gave me the contact information of her niece who is currently in high school. I texted her niece and she said she does after-school sports and she did not have time to take on any more projects, but she wished me the best of luck in my study.

Finally, I approached professional Arab organizations with branches in Illinois. Through a Google search, I identified four popular Arab interest groups, which were as follows: Network of Arab American Professionals (NAAP), Arab American Engineers and Architects Association (AAEA), Nablus Society (NS), and Arab American Family Services (AAFS). I sent an email to
the board members of these organizations with a copy of the IRB consent form. In the email I asked the board members if they knew any families with girls that fit the research criteria.

After sending out this email, I waited two weeks and did not hear back from anyone. I then called phone numbers I saw listed on the organizations’ websites and Facebook pages. The Nablus Society did not have any phone numbers listed so I drove with my husband to the south of Chicago where the majority of Arabs live and spoke with the owner of Jerusalem Restaurant and Banquets. The owner was originally from the city of Nablus, which the club is named after. As my husband and I broke bread at his restaurant, the owner shared that he was a member of the social club and he gave the president’s number of the club to my husband. The owner suggested that the president would love to hear from us as he was always trying to recruit new members. Once the phone numbers were obtained, I spoke with multiple board members, who all invited me to attend their next event. It was from the connections made at these events that I was able to recruit participants.

AAEA had a picnic where I met a woman who had just moved back to the United States from Jordan. She was originally Palestinian and both her and her husband’s family lived in Amman, Jordan. She had four children, and while two are high school age, she said they wore the hijab so they would not fit the criteria of the study; however, her daughter’s friends did not wear the hijab. The woman shared that she could connect me with the families of her daughter’s friends. A couple of weeks after the picnic, I texted my contact from AAEA and reminded her of my study. She was happy to help. Later that day, she sent me the contact information of three girls and all three of them became participants in the study. While the families and the girls signed the IRB consent forms, they still were cautious about how I would use the information. The girls all wanted reassurance that the information was going to be used to help their identity
group and not harm it. The families and especially the girls were curious about my story and my identity. However, once they learned that I am Palestinian Muslim as well, they were comfortable and cooperative in sharing their identities.

I also attended an event through AAFS on domestic violence. There, I met a young girl who was making *henna* patterns on people’s hands to celebrate the event. I told this *henna* artist about my study and she shared that she is originally Palestinian, and while she wears the *hijab*, she was friends with other girls at her school who fit the criteria. Later that week, I texted her about the study again and asked if she could share the contact information of potential participants. That evening, the *henna* artist replied back with the names and numbers of three contacts. I spoke with all three but only one of them wanted to participate in the study. The other two girls said they were too involved with school and extracurricular events and they could not commit to one more thing; however, they were happy that I was doing a study on Palestinians and they wished me the best of luck with the research.

I also met women from the NAAP and NS and followed up with them about the research study. I received two leads but neither of them followed through. Overall, I was able to recruit four girls that came from contacts through professional Arab American organizations, specifically AAEA and AAFS.

**Participants**

In qualitative research, the number of research participants is not as important as reaching data saturation about the phenomenon to be studied (Glesne, 2006). Additionally, with fewer participants, researchers are able to gather rich data as opposed to shallow data.

For this study, four participants were selected. Participants were chosen to meet specific criteria (criterion sampling). First, the participants were born in the United States and identified as second-generation Palestinian-American Muslim female adolescent high school students. I
chose this focus for multiple reasons. As mentioned in chapter one, Arab Americans are a growing population within the United States and their experiences have yet to be fully explored. Additionally, past research reveals instances of Arab students feeling misunderstood on school campuses; therefore, this research seeks to contribute to a growing body of knowledge that will help educators and other professionals interact effectively with this population of students.

Table 3-3 below provides a participant profile of the four girls from the study. The first column is a list of the pseudonyms, which each participant chose for themselves. The second column lists the ages of the girls, and the third and fourth columns list the birthplaces of the girls and of their parents. Following the table is a brief introduction to each of the four girls who participated in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Parents’ Birthplace (Mother &amp; Father)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>South Carolina, U.S.A.</td>
<td>U.S.A &amp; Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Illinois, U.S.A.</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>California, U.S.A.</td>
<td>Palestine &amp; Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Illinois, U.S.A</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia &amp; Jordan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spirit.** Spirit was a second-generation Palestinian-American Muslim female high school student who was originally from the Palestinian city of Yaffa. At the time of the study, she was 17 years old and a senior enrolled in a public high school in Illinois. She was scheduled to graduate high school one year early. Spirit was of average height with chestnut colored eyes and glowing olive skin. She had curly black hair with natural light brown highlights. She self-identified as a Southern Palestinian American Muslim. She said she was a southerner because her family originally immigrated to South Carolina before they moved to Illinois. She still had
family living in South Carolina, and she could not forget that part of her because the way of life in South Carolina is very different from life in the state of Illinois. Spirit said there were more Arab Muslims in Illinois, and in South Carolina, the Arabs are more Americanized. The only family member that still lived in Palestine was her maternal grandmother whom she visits with her family every other summer. Most of her family on both her mother’s and her father’s side immigrated to the United States due to the civil wars with Israel. She shared that life here in the United States was just easier. Spirit hoped to attend college and graduate from nursing school. She saw herself getting married in the future and eventually wearing the hijab after she got married.

**Jordan.** Jordan was also a second-generation Palestinian-American Muslim female American high school student. She was a tall and lanky fair-skinned girl with wavy black hair and black rimmed glasses. Jordan was originally from the Palestinian city of Ein Seinia. At the time of the study, she was 17 years old and she was a senior in a public high school in Illinois. She was on the list of early graduates from high school along with Spirit. All of her family now lives either in the U.S.A. or in Amman, Jordan. The last time she visited Ein Seinia was when she was an infant. However, she visits Amman almost every summer with her mother. Jordan self-identified as a second-generation Palestinian-American Muslim educator: she loves children and one day she wants to become an elementary school teacher. She saw herself getting married in the future and eventually wearing the hijab after she gets married.

**Halsey.** Halsey was a second-generation Palestinian-American Muslim female high school student. At the time of the study, she was 14 years old and a freshman in high school. She was the youngest of all four participants. She was half Jordanian and half Palestinian, but she identified most as a Palestinian because her mother is Palestinian and she was closer to her
mother’s side of the family. Her mother was originally from Beit Iksa. She had never visited Palestine or Jordan; however, she said she identified as being from Palestine and Jordan and she feels very connected to those places. She also said her father encouraged her to cherish her Palestinian side because of the importance of understanding the struggles her people go through. Halsey was a tall, dirty blonde 14-year-old. She had long flowing hair and honey-colored eyes. She was timid but warm and confident in her speech and in sharing her experiences. Figure 3-1 below is a map of the Middle East. While all four participants were born in and are citizens of the United States, they identified as Palestinian. Moreover, three of the four girls had ties with the country of Jordan. Spirit travels every summer through the country of Jordan to visit Palestine. She was not allowed to travel through Israeli because she was a Palestinian ID card holder. Jordan could no longer return to Palestine because Palestinians that left as a result of the wars with Israeli are denied the right to return. Jordan’s family resettled in the city of Amman and that was where she travels every summer to visit family.

Figure 3-1. The figure above shows a map of the Palestine/Israel and its surrounding countries. The participants in this study are second generation Palestinian immigrants from various cities in the occupied territory of the West Bank. The participants also have ties to the country Jordan through travel or nationality. Halsey is half Jordanian on her father’s side.
**Hope.** Hope was a second-generation Palestinian American Muslim female high school student. Hope was a girl of average height with straight, dark black hair and black rimmed glasses. She was slim and fair-skinned. Hope identified as being originally from Beit Iksa, Palestine. Both her mother and father were born there, but Hope’s mother was raised in Saudi Arabia while her father was raised in Beit Iksa, Palestine. Both her mother and father moved to the United States to study and met at the university through a mutual friend, Hope’s paternal aunt. Hope was a 16-year-old high school junior. She attended a private all-girl Islamic school that goes from kindergarten all the way through twelfth grade. Hope visits Beit Iksa every other summer with her family. Hope recognized that life in Beit Iksa is different than life in the states and she doesn’t ever see herself living there, but she still identified as being Palestinian. Hope’s future goals were to become a pediatrician and get married while she was still attending medical school. She saw herself wearing the *hijab* one day, but she didn’t know when; she said her father gave her until college to wear the *hijab*. Hope shared even though he has said this, he does not enforce it: her older sister is a college student and she still does not wear the *hijab*.

**Setting**

This study took place in the southwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois an area with a high population of Palestinian Americans. The southwest suburbs include cities such as Oak Lawn, Tinley Park, Burbank, Bridgeview, Hickory Hills, Alsip, Palos Hills, Tinley Park, and Orland Park. Bridgeview is even identified as “Little Palestine” on Google Maps. All of the girls participating in the study were proud to share this fact with me. The schools the girls attended were all located in these southwest suburbs. The interviews were all conducted in the Orland Park Library. For each of the four participants, three interviews were conducted. Table 3-4 below lists where the interviews took place as well as where each participant’s school is located.
Table 3-4. Location of Interviews and School of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview Location</th>
<th>School Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>Orland Park Public Library</td>
<td>Tinley Park, Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Orland Park Public Library</td>
<td>Tinley Park, Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey</td>
<td>Orland Park Public Library</td>
<td>Oak Lawn, Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Orland Park Public Library</td>
<td>Bridgeview, Illinois</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Illinois is home to the sixth largest population of Arab Americans, it is the state with one of the highest concentrations of Palestinian Americans (AAIF, 2012). Palestinians constitute 60% of Illinois’ Arab population. Immigration of Palestinians has been steadily increasing since the late nineteenth century when early Palestinian male immigrants came to the United States for opportunity and to escape the series of wars with Israel. Originally, Palestinian immigrants owned small retail shops, but eventually the later generations began to attend professional schools and follow careers in medicine, education, and law. The 1960s saw the greatest influx of Palestinian Americans immigrate to Illinois as families relocated due to the Israeli military occupation, starting in 1967. Israeli law denied Palestinians living in the diaspora residency or the right to return, including any Palestinians who live outside of the territories for a period of over three years (Abunimah & Ibish, 2001; Cainkar, 2005).

Data Collection Procedures

Three data collection methods were used for the purpose of this research: in-depth interviews, artifact elicitation, and document analysis. These three data collection methods were chosen for triangulation purposes, as together they created a “checks and balances” effect, in order to gain rich and reliable data. Below is a description of each method and how it was used in the study.
In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews, also known as phenomenological interviewing in Seidman’s three interview series, was the main method used to understand the perceptions of the interviewees. An in-depth interview with one participant lasted approximately 90 minutes over the course of three interview sessions. However, Seidman stipulates that for younger participants, the time recommended for each might be cut in half. Additionally, while I highlighted in the IRB consent form as well as at the start of the first interview session the amount of time needed for each interview session, the participants themselves ultimately decided how long they were able to stay and how much information they wanted to share with me based on the interview protocol questions. After each session, I scheduled the next interview within a week so as not to lose momentum, rapport, and interest of the participants (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003; Seidman, 2006; Spradley, 1979).

Moreover, in-depth interviews use an open-ended interview protocol that allows for the participant to share life experiences that may not be strictly answering the questions in the interview protocol (Seidman, 2006). According to qualitative researcher Irving Seidman (2006), “at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9). Therefore, based on the research questions, in-depth interviewing is the most appropriate data collection tool for the purpose of this study. The study sought to understand the experiences of the participants as well as how school influences how they see themselves, and in order to understand this, each interview had a focus that drew upon the social history of the participants’ lives and their lives in relation to school. Also, the multiple interviews allowed me to build rapport and to understand the full context in which the participants live, which a one-time interview does not allow for.
Another reason in-depth interviewing was an appropriate data collection method is because the participants were asked about sensitive and confidential topics that they may not want to share with a larger audience. As Rubin and Rubin (2012) emphasized, “an interview is part of an evolving relationship” (p. 151). Therefore, in-depth interviews provide a private one-on-one venue for participants to feel comfortable in sharing their experiences with me. I assured the participants that all information would be confidential and pseudonyms would be used in place of their real names for purposes of anonymity. Additionally, while I had prepared an interview protocol, the questions were open-ended and allowed for interviewees to share their complete experiences related to their identity construction.

The in-depth interviews followed Seidman’s three-tier interview process wherein participants were asked to sit for three interview sessions, as well as Seidman’s (2006) model of individual interviewing. Each of the three sessions had a focus of past, present, and future, respectively. Additionally, each set of interview questions were organized under major topics. For the first interview session that centered on the past, I asked questions about the major topics of childhood, family, religion, and school. The first interview therefore focused on the participant’s life history. The interview protocol asked a series of open-ended questions that allowed for the participants to share their life experiences starting from their early life until the present time (see Appendix A). For the second interview that centered on the present, I asked questions about school, family, personal, and sociopolitical contexts. The questions focused on the details of current lived experiences as related to their identity and identity construction, especially in the context of school life (see Appendix B). Finally, for the third interview session that centered on the future, I asked questions about the following major topics: school, family, friends, and personal goals. Questions from the third interview elicited the participants to reflect
on the meaning of their lived experiences. They were asked to make sense of their life experiences as related to their identity and school. This final interview session also focused on how the participants saw themselves in the future based on the information they shared about their lives in the first two interviews (see Appendix C).

A set of open-ended interview questions based on the major topics outlined above was used to guide their narratives; however, the girls were allowed to share what they felt comfortable sharing. There was no limit on the information they wanted to share with me. Additionally, during the second interview session, the girls were asked to share artifacts that represented a piece of their identity. During the final interview session, the girls were asked to discuss their understanding of their school culture based on school documents that were collected between the second and third interviews. The girls were excited to share a piece of their life with someone they felt could understand them, and they were happy to know that this research might benefit other girls as they make their way through life as second-generation Palestinian-American Muslim female adolescents.

Table 3-5 shows the amount of time taken for each interview session with the four participants. As revealed in the table, all of the interviews were under one hour. Additionally, the second interview took the longest for each of the participants. This is due to the fact that during the second interview, the participants were not only asked to discuss the questions from the third interview protocol (Appendix C), but they were also asked to discuss the artifacts they brought to share. Furthermore, during the second interview, the girls were asked about their school context. The participants were also asked to review and discuss the publicly available documents I had gathered from the school.
The table also outlines the total amount of time spent with each girl as well as the total amount of time spent overall (with all four participants). However, this table does not take into account the time spent setting appointments and building rapport via email, text, and phone conversations. An average of one hour and 49 minutes was spent interviewing each of the participants for the study.

Table 3-5. Amount of Time Spent on Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Time</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
<th>Total Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>31min</td>
<td>41min 31s</td>
<td>33min 56s</td>
<td>1hr 46min 27s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>25min 34s</td>
<td>39min 10s</td>
<td>20min 3s</td>
<td>1hr 24min 47s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey</td>
<td>29min 15s</td>
<td>34 min 44s</td>
<td>21min 49s</td>
<td>1hr 25min 48s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>1hr 37s</td>
<td>1hr 7min 27s</td>
<td>30 min 5s</td>
<td>2hr 38min 9s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Girls</td>
<td>2hr 26min 26s</td>
<td>3hrs 2min 52s</td>
<td>1hr 45min 53s</td>
<td>7hr 15 min 11s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, Table 3-6 below outlines the amount of transcription pages that resulted from each individual interview. The average total transcripts for each participant was sixty four pages long.

Table 3-6. Transcription Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcription Totals</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
<th>Total Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>14 pages</td>
<td>19 pages</td>
<td>4 pages</td>
<td>37 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>15 pages</td>
<td>21 pages</td>
<td>5 pages</td>
<td>41 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey</td>
<td>25 pages</td>
<td>30 pages</td>
<td>11 pages</td>
<td>66 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>44 pages</td>
<td>49 pages</td>
<td>22 pages</td>
<td>115 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Girls</td>
<td>98 pages</td>
<td>119 pages</td>
<td>42 pages</td>
<td>259 pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by the primary researcher. The interviews were filed by name and interview session. There were a total of three interview
sessions for each participant; therefore, each participant had a file marked with their pseudonym, an underscore symbol, and the corresponding interview session (e.g., Spirit_1). Each round of interviews took place within one week of each other. This timeline allowed for the participant and I to stay connected to the research topic. It also provided the participants with flexibility for change if an emergency came up, such as an illness. In one instance, Spirit’s grandmother became ill and needed to be rushed to the emergency room. Spirit shared the family car so she had to reschedule our second interview date. Additionally, the timeframe also allowed the participants enough time between interview sessions to reflect about the interview protocol and their responses. Between each interview, I sent the transcripts and initial thoughts about the interviews to the girls as a way of member checking (Glesne, 2006, p. 38). I did this to make sure the voices of the participants were coming through and my interpretation of the information was correct. Finally, the interviews took place at a convenient location for the participants. For all four of the participants, all three interviews took place at the public library, as is shown in Table 3-4 above. Table 3-7 below outlines the interview timelines for each of the four participants. The first column lists the names of the participants and the three subsequent columns share the dates the interviews took place for each of the three interview sessions.

Table 3-7. Interview Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>12/18/2017</td>
<td>12/26/2017</td>
<td>01/02/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>12/18/2017</td>
<td>12/26/2017</td>
<td>01/02/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey</td>
<td>12/07/2017</td>
<td>12/14/2017</td>
<td>12/21/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>12/10/2017</td>
<td>12/17/2017</td>
<td>12/23/2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before the first interview session, I received consent from the families of all four participants since all of the participants were under the age of 18 years old. After I handed each of the participants an assent form, together the participants and I set up a time to meet for the first interview session. I emphasized the interviews were for research purposes only and the information shared during the interviews would remain confidential. I also made it clear that the participants had the right to back out of the research study if they felt uncomfortable at any point during the research process.

Finally, I came to each interview session with an interview protocol (Appendix A, B, and C) that guided each interview session; however, follow-up and probing questions were used throughout the interview in order to “encourage elaboration, get clarification, generate examples, and shape the direction of the interview when informants tend to move away from the subject at hand” (Hatch, 2002, p.109). This is especially important to remember when following Seidman’s (2006) three-tier interview process, as each interview has a specific focus. At the end of the first interview, I directed the interviewees to gather artifacts in preparation for the following interview.

**Artifact Elicitation**

Another form of data collection in qualitative studies is artifact elicitation. Artifact elicitation is a type of data collection method that asks participants to gather material objects, such as photographs that are representative of the topic to be studied, in this case, the participants’ life experiences as it relates to their identity and school. Moreover, data collection tools such as artifact collection promote deeper levels of reflexive thinking, enhance the interview process, help participants (especially young people) to discuss difficult and abstract concepts such as identity, contribute to building rapport and trust with the participants, and provide a way to combine visual and verbal language. Moreover, some interviewees prefer
Sharing photos (a type of artifact) over the standard interview process (Bryan, 2012; Malcolm, 2011). According to Collier and Collier (1986), collection of artifacts such as photographs provides a context for data that is missing from written transcriptions. Moreover, Glesne (2006) believes photography provides the participants with a more active role in the data collection process. Additionally, by allowing the participants to gather and present artifacts, such as photographs that relate to the study, the researcher is better able to “uncover items that he would not see or otherwise ask about” (Glesne, 2006, p. 63).

Similarly, objects have physical characteristics that carry memory and create meaning (Turan, 2010). In a study conducted on Palestinians living in the diaspora, researcher Zeynep Turan contends,

> [f]or those who have experienced dislocation and ethnic cleansing, objects are potent touchstones to remember the past and retell stories. Along with narratives, objects are essential tools for providing cultural continuity over a long period of time. In cases of forced dis-placement, objects that reinforce ‘place attachment’ become critical for the continuation of cultural memory and cultural narrative for displaced peoples. (2010, p. 11)

Glesne (2006) also warned about the ethical considerations when using objects such as photography as a method for data collection. One such concern is related to confidentiality and consent. Participants may be concerned about who will have access to the objects and how they will be used. However, I assured the participants that the artifacts would only be used for the purposes of the study and only during the interviews. Otherwise, the artifacts would be kept with the participants. The artifacts were only discussed during the interview sessions and they were written about in the study. I also took a photograph of each object to use during the analysis part of the study and to be incorporated in my dissertation paper. Additionally, the participants were asked to sign an IRB consent form at the beginning of the first interview session that provided consent to use the artifacts in the dissertation.
At the end of the first interview session, participants were provided with detailed verbal and written directions (Appendix D) for the artifact elicitation portion of the study. Participants were instructed to gather three to five artifacts that represented their identity. The participants were given one week between the first interview and the second interview to collect their artifacts. Once the participants gathered the artifacts, they were asked to create, in writing, hashtag captions for each of their artifacts to share during the second interview session. Table 3-8 below records the types of artifacts the participants shared with me that represented their identity in some way. The third column of the table is a list of the hashtags the participants would assign each artifact. The final column lists the number of artifacts each of the participants chose to share.

Table 3-8. Participant Artifacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th>Hashtags</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>3 objects (scarf, necklace, and lanyard) &amp; 1 photograph</td>
<td>1. Scarf = #demmeFalestini (my blood is Palestinian</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(family photo of herself with her mother and older sister as a child)</td>
<td>2. Necklace = #roots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Lanyard = #OG (Original Gangster)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Photograph = #growingup</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>2 objects (necklace and middle school letters) &amp; 1 photograph</td>
<td>1. Necklace = #memories</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(photo of herself as a child eating molokhia or jute leaves with rice)</td>
<td>2. Letters = #middleschool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Photograph = #childhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey</td>
<td>2 objects (bracelet and necklace) &amp; 1 photograph</td>
<td>1. Bracelet = #home</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(family photo of herself with her older sister, father, and paternal grandfather)</td>
<td>2. Necklace = #happiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Photograph = #family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>4 objects (bracelet, glass statue, canvas, and prayer beads)</td>
<td>1. Bracelet = #freeFalestine</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Glass Statue = #forAllah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Canvas = #beaware</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Prayer Beads = #sisters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the start of the second interview session, I used the artifact elicitation protocol to inquire about the artifacts the participants brought to the interview session. I asked the participants to explain the hashtags they created for each of the artifacts. I also asked why the artifacts were important to them. I took pictures of most of the artifacts; however, I did not take pictures of the family photos that were shared as artifacts because the photos provided identifiable information and could be traced back to the true identity of the participants. Also, Halsey shared that her sister usually wears hijab; but in the family photo she brought as an artifact, her sister was not wearing hijab because she was with family, so Halsey didn’t want me to take a photo of the family picture because she felt that would be disrespectful of her sister’s identity. I agreed to any such request and reassured the participants that I would only include the pictures of the objects in my dissertation.

**Document Analysis**

The third data source was document analysis. Document analysis is important because it can uncover the meanings behind institutions, such as the institution of school that influence identity construction. For example, Hatch believes, “[d]ocuments are powerful indicators of the value systems operating within institutions” (2002, p. 117). Document analysis is a form of inconspicuous data that can be gathered easily, and documents tell their own story independent from the participants’ perspectives (Hatch, 2002). Document collection allows me, the researcher, to compare the information gathered to other data to create a complete narrative of all contextual factors that are relevant to the study of identity formation (Hatch, 2002). According to researchers on identity, Abes et al. (2007), identity is influenced by contextual factors such as family background, sociocultural conditions, current experiences, career decisions, and life planning. In other words, the way an individual interprets contextual factors is the meaning-
making aspect of how identity is constructed. Cerbo (2010), in her research of Muslim undergraduate women and their identity development, found:

Reviewing documents allowed me to gain a sense of the overall campus climate in regards to possible preexisting real or imagined stereotypes and biases that may influence social interactions, as well as environmental factors, such as institutional supports and challenges that may foster or inhibit identity development. (p.83)

Document analysis was important to this study because it provided me with a more complete picture in terms of contextual factors that influenced how the participants constructed their identity in the context of their school life.

For this study, I gathered documents from the schools of the participants in order to understand the context in which they lived. For each school, the research gathered a different set of readily available documents that represented the culture of the participants’ schools, as shown in Table 3-9. These documents were analyzed for the purposes of this study only. Spirit and Jordan attend the same school; therefore, the documents gathered for these two participants were the same. Halsey attends a high school just one city over from Spirit and Jordan. I met with the principal of Halsey’s high school, and he called the PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) liaison down to his office. The PTO liaison specifically works with the Arab-speaking families within the school due to the large number of Arab families they have at the school. The liaison gave me a folder with documents the school provides to families that are new to the district. Inside the folder, there were documents on both sides of the folder flaps: on the left side were documents in English and on the right side almost all of the same documents were present, but they were translated into Arabic. The documents that were present within the folder are listed in Table 3-9 below.

Finally, when I visited Hope’s school, the dean of students greeted her. It was a reading day during finals week, when the students can stay home and study for their final exams, so the
students were not present on the day that I visited. The administrative staff was present and busy in meetings all day. The dean still gave me a tour of the school. The dean did not have readily available documents to share with me; however, there were fliers and posters hanging all over the walls of the school and I was encouraged to take pictures by the dean so that I can gain a complete perspective about Spirit and Jordan’s school context.

### Table 3-9. School Documents for Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>School Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>Pictures, Newsletter, Student newspaper, Points of emphasis tri fold brochure, Guide to activities and clubs tri fold brochure, Final exam schedule, School schedule, Peer mediation flier tri fold brochure, Advisory program flier, Student handbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Pictures, Newsletter, Student newspaper, Points of emphasis tri fold brochure, Guide to activities and clubs tri fold brochure, Final exam schedule, School schedule, Peer mediation flier tri fold brochure, Advisory program flier, Student handbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey</td>
<td>Pictures, Freshman planning guide, Parent-staff student agreement, Technology news trifold brochure, Career and technical education tri fold brochure, Guide to activities and clubs tri fold brochure, Parent quick reference guide tri fold brochure, Parent academy flyer, During and after school tutoring schedule, Sports try out calendar, QR code for college information, Pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Pictures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I analyzed each document individually. I identified four major parts of each document: purpose, message, audience, and significance (Golia & Katz, 2017). In identifying purpose, I made observations such as the date it was created, the author, and the type of document. Next, I read the document entirely and identified the message of the written piece by summarizing and asking questions. Then, I identified the intended audience of the document or who was originally meant to read it. Finally, I made a conclusion about the significance of the document, or why the
document was important (Golia & Katz, 2014). Once I analyzed each document individually, I looked across the documents and identified common themes based on my individual observations of each document.

Moreover, I took a tour of the schools and made observations of other documents such as posters, slogans, and other artifacts hanging throughout the halls. I was also given the opportunity to sit with a representative from the school and talk about the school context. Table 3-10 below lists the school representative who spoke with me regarding the school environment context.

### Table 3-10. List of School Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>School Representative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>Vice Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Vice Principal (same school as Spirit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey</td>
<td>Principal, PTO Liaison, and EL teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Dean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, students are provided with a hidden curriculum throughout the school day via posters, slogans, initiatives and other school-related materials that convey messages to students about the school climate and societal norms (Johnson, Musial, Hall, & Gollnick, 2018).

**Data Collection and Analysis Schedule**

Table 3-11 below outlines the data collection and data analysis schedule for the study. It includes the time frame within which each task was completed as well as the number of participants involved in the entire study. The table also shows the purpose for each task of the study, how each task was carried out (process), and how each data source was analyzed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Source of Data Collection</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dec 2017   | Four (females) | 1st round of interviews (focus on life history) | -Gained consent (IRB forms)  
-Arranged and conducted initial interviews using the interview protocol 1  
-Explained artifact elicitation protocol for 2nd interview meeting  
-Contacted the principals of the participants’ schools and set a date to visit to gather documents for document analysis  
-Shared transcription of first interview session to each of the participants (member checking) | -Transcribed first interview  
-Began initial analysis by identifying themes in the data  
-Shared initial themes with participants | -Narrative Analysis: read through the transcripts and identified common themes as they relate to the research questions. |
| December 2017 | Four (same group of participants) | 2nd round of interviews (focus on details of experience or present day and discuss artifacts) | -Conducted second session of interviews using interview protocol 2  
-Discussed artifacts using artifact protocol with participants (Appendix D)  
-Began school visitations and collected documents  
-Shared transcription of second interview session to each of the participants | -Transcribed second set of interviews  
-Began initial analysis by identifying themes in the data  
-Shared initial themes with participants | -Narrative Analysis: read through the transcripts and identified common themes as they relate to the research questions.  
-Document Analysis: analyze each document using document analysis and then identify a common theme across the documents. |
Data Analysis

Narrative Analysis

The data collected from the participants was analyzed using narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is a way of viewing data in story form and focusing mainly on what is conveyed and how it is conveyed through the data. Narrative analysis “gives insight into how individuals structure communication for effect and how they construct meaning from their life experiences” (Grbich, 2007, p. 124).

According to qualitative researchers Daiute and Lightfoot (2004), narrative analysis is an appropriate form of data analysis in research studies involving identity for three main reasons. First, it is designed to evaluate an individual’s experience in its entirety, or holistically, in order to make meaning. Secondly, the narrative discourse that is generated through data collection provides a rich context for understanding identity construction and personal development, which is the purpose of this study. Finally, narrative analysis “generates unique insights into the range of multiple, intersecting forces that order and illuminate relations between self and society” (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, p. xii). Overall, narrative analysis therefore provides an appropriate way for understanding identity research (Grbich, 2007).

Narrative Analysis and the Current Study

Narrative analysis was the most appropriate form of data analysis for this study as it seeks to understand the lived experiences of identity through the lens of second-generation Palestinian-American Muslim adolescents. Moreover, narrative analysis requires staying close to the data by identifying patterns or themes throughout the data collection process. I used thematic coding within narrative analysis to understand the experiences of the participants within the study. Once the themes were identified, I arranged them in a story form according to theme. The voices of the participants were clear through narrative analysis as pieces of the data from the
interviews were included throughout telling the narrative. My role in narrative analysis is to present the data as closely as possible to how the interviewees experienced life. I made sure to keep personal judgments out of the narrative analysis process by keeping a reflective journal and making myself aware of my biases.

There are many approaches to conducting narrative analysis; this study follows researcher Ezzy (2002). According to Ezzy, there are five major steps in analyzing data in narrative inquiry: (1) gather the data, (2) analyze the data using a thematic analysis (3) conduct a cross case analysis (compare the data for similarities and differences across participants), (4) situate the data contextually, and (5) identify your themes in the form of a story (Barusch, 2012).

**Gathering the data.** For this study, I first familiarized myself with the data, starting with creating the transcripts of the interviews. Then I listened to the audiotapes and then read the transcripts one more time, making initial observations in my reflection journal. Table 3-12 below reveals my initial observations: The first column identifies the interview session number that references the raw data from column two. The third column is my initial observations as comments and questions after her first review of the data.

**Analyzing the data using thematic analysis.** For the second step of narrative analysis, the transcripts, documents, and artifacts collected from the participants were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) five step thematic analysis cycle. There are five parts to conducting a thematic analysis of the qualitative data: (1) gathering and transcribing the data, (2) beginning open coding, (3) identifying themes, (4) reviewing themes and collapsing them under a broader code, (5) creating a story by introducing the themes and matching them up with relevant examples from the data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Session #</th>
<th>Raw Data</th>
<th>Initial Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit Interview #2</td>
<td>Probably like when... when you hear about like terrorist attacks and stuff like that they bring it up that they like always assume like it’s like us or like it gets talked about in the school where you feel like they think like all Muslims do all that stuff but like nobody really understands so you just stay quiet so like it just like burns us inside. There’s nothing you can do but just to stay quiet because they don’t really understand.</td>
<td>Spirit feels vulnerable and helpless when she hears stereotypes about Muslims at school. The phrase “burns us inside” was used in a collective sense. This reveals a strong rapport with the participant as well as her understanding that Muslims all feel the same way. Also, powerful description to depict how she feels when stereotypes are used towards her identity as a Muslim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan Interview Session #2</td>
<td>The way they like label the terrorist attacks or like the like you know it’s just... there’s always that... there was like a shooting in Texas and by a White man and it was just like a oh he’s not mentally stable but come uh like Mustafa come and do that like they... they’re labeled as a terrorist or a part of ISIS (whispers) something like that. Uhm, my dad’s not... my dad hates that stuff like he’s just like a very... my dad has that... my dad definitely has that like American side to him like he just, he just like, like he’s just very like he doesn’t like watching like the Arabi news like it’s just like makes him... it burns his like soul inside saying how bad everything is going on and it’s just like he just doesn’t like that and my mom doesn’t really watch the news.</td>
<td>Jordan is angered by the stereotyping of Muslims in the media. The phrase “it burns like his soul inside” evokes a powerful image to explain how her father feels when he sees how Arabs and Muslims are portrayed in the American media. It seems her parents avoid and shut down when they hear the negative stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims in the media. Jordan attributes this to her father’s American side and her mother’s lack of interest. This is the second time the word burn was used to discuss the same phenomenon across participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey Interview Session #1</td>
<td>No. I don’t really argue with anyone at school. I try and stay away from problems. I think the worst one, I got into debate with one kid in sixth grade over religion because he was like we- it was 9/11 and well you know 9/11 there’s a lot of people that say, ‘Oh terrorist.’ Like almost all Muslims are terrorist. And we were watching the memorial videos and like this kid says all Muslims are terrorists. I was like, ‘That's not right.’ I was like, ‘Don't say that.’ And he is like, ‘Why?’ I was like, ‘I’m Muslim, I’m not a terrorist.’ I was like, ‘That's wrong.’ And then, there was an argument. And we got called to the principal’s office.</td>
<td>Halsey advocated for herself. She has a strong sense of what is just and she felt confident to speak on it. The principal didn’t care about what the argument was about. I wonder what the school culture was like at her middle school. It might not have validated the diversity at the school, which is why Halsey might not have felt connected. Halsey says she tries to stay out of arguments and drama; however, there is a self-advocacy piece that pulls her in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants are dealing with issues related to stereotypes towards Muslims. How do each of the girls deal with these issues and do they deal with it the same way every time or does it depend on the context?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Session #</th>
<th>Raw Data</th>
<th>Initial Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Across Interviews</td>
<td>So I go to Aqsa school which is an all-girl Islamic school in Bridgeview which is like 20 minutes away from here.</td>
<td>I wonder if her experience will be completely different than the other participants because she attends an all-girl Islamic school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Interview Session #1</td>
<td>When asked how old she is she says: 14 years old.</td>
<td>I wonder how Halsey’s experience will compare to the other three participants because she is the youngest of the participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey Interview Session #1</td>
<td>Um, yeah, I don’t get like too close, like I just get people to talk to in school but I don’t really hang out with them outside of school. I only have one friend I’m really close to and she still lives in California.</td>
<td>Is Halsey’s struggle in feeling connected to school related to her identity or her transition into a new school and new state or both?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I open-coded across all three data sources by going line by line and pulling out units of meaning. As I read through each line, I created codes that preserved the participant’s words in context. In other words, through a detailed examination of the data sources, each separate idea was given a conceptual name. This process was performed on each transcript to identify phenomena and place these phenomena into categories or themes. Themes were formed based on similarity of concepts found in the data and then labeled. Table 3-13 below reveals a snapshot of the open coding process for the first participant, Spirit. The first column identifies the participant’s pseudonym and the second column reveals the raw data, the participant’s words from the interview transcripts. The last three columns show coding process starting from open codes to possible themes to a major theme.

After completing the open coding phase, I put the data back together by making connections among codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This stage is known as axial coding or coming up with potential themes, where
comparisons are used to identify the properties of each category and explain the relationships between categories and the subcategories within each category (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Next, selective coding was garnered to examine the data at higher levels of abstraction and then to identify a core category that includes all the other categories that developed from the data. The main story elements developed from the core category, which led to a description of the data in narrative form (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The core category is also referred to as a label or a major motif.

Table 3-13. Example of Open Codes for Participant Spirit Transcript

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Words</th>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Possible Themes</th>
<th>Label/ Major Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just cause like if I would speak Arabi, like, they’d [Palestinian American friends] understand me if I, like, do things together, like, family-wise they’d, like, come along.</td>
<td>Speak Arabi, Palestinian American friends understand me, Do things together, Family-wise, Like Illinois, Only invite Palestinian friends</td>
<td>Language Use, Friendship, Connection of Family and Friends, Peer relationships also relates to connection with school</td>
<td>Influence of peer relationships over identity construction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conducting a cross case analysis. The last stages to narrative analysis included comparing the data across the participants by identifying aspects of the data that were the same and the aspects that were different. Additionally, the information gathered was situated within context. This included even the context in which I interviewed the participants and not just the context of the events that were shared during the interview sessions.

Situating the data contextually. In Chapter 4, each participant is analyzed individually. I shared a brief introduction to the school and home context of each of the participants. Additionally, for each participant, I identified themes generated through analysis and shared participant stories and artifacts that match with the themes.
Identifying themes in story form. Finally, Chapters 4 through 7 represent each participants’ individual story of identity construction in the face of their school context as well as their personal lives. I also conducted a cross case analysis and identified themes that were shared by all the participants and ones that were not shared for all the participants.

Researcher Positionality

Clarification of researcher bias is a self-reflective but essential piece of the process to ensuring the quality of the study. Glesne (2006) believes that clarification of researcher bias means being self-aware of your subjectivity and being cognizant of how one will monitor their subjectivity within their research. By laying out a positionality statement, I declared potential biases that may influence or impact the research design. The positionality statement held me accountable for this bias and allowed me as the researcher to keep it in check through procedures and processes (Seidman, 2006). While researcher bias can never truly be eliminated, through reflection and journaling, it can safeguard the researcher from allowing it to creep into the research study in unintended ways. In addition to other researcher tools, below I outline ways in which I was able to position myself within the current study as a way to limit the impact of my researcher bias on my research endeavor: reflect on my personal identity, reflect on my previous experiences as a teacher and researcher, and use reflective journaling as a part of the research.

My Identity

As for my biases, growing up, it was important to my parents that my siblings and I were raised bilingual, speaking Arabic and English. My parents maintained an Arabic-only policy wherein they only spoke Arabic in the house because they knew we would learn English from the American schools we attended. Every summer as a child, my parents afforded me the opportunity to visit my extended family in Palestine or the West Bank. During the summers I spent in Palestine, my mother had a private tutor come to the house to maintain our Arabic
language. Additionally, I attended a summer camp in the West Bank that was built for Palestinian orphans whose parents died or were imprisoned in the civil wars with Israel. While there were other camps that my cousins and other Palestinian Americans attended, my mother chose this summer camp because she wanted it to serve as a reminder to be thankful for what my siblings and I have. She said that we were able to travel back and forth from the United States and Palestine so she wanted us to take advantage of the opportunities we were given in the United States but not to ever forget our Palestinian roots and the people we left behind.

In the United States, my father was weary of the negative influences he felt were rampant in the public educational school system. Therefore, my father enrolled my siblings and I in a private, conservative Baptist school because he felt the way Christians practiced their faith was the closest to Islam and he emphasized, “[w]e are all people of the book.” My father also taught me to value education because that was the only way that I could make positive changes in the world. As a result of the discrimination I faced at school, I created a strong student identity. I felt that my student identity put me on equal footing with others and it shielded the parts of me that did not fit in with my peers.

When I graduated high school, I received a scholarship to study at the University of Florida. My first semester as a freshman, I took an undergraduate course in adolescent psychology and identity development has intrigued me ever since. In that course, I was able to make sense of the experiences I had as a young bicultural child living across two worlds, and I knew I wanted to become a teacher of English speakers of other languages (ESOL) to help other students navigate the murky waters of being bicultural. Therefore, the idea of researching young Palestinian girls came natural to me because I wanted to learn something about myself in the
process. However, I knew it was important that I realize that my experiences were not the same as the experiences of the participants in this study.

Moreover, regional differences played a part in the research. After moving to the United States from Jerusalem, I grew up in Florida. The community I was raised in was a small group of Palestinians that were related to one another or to my family in one way or another. The other community I was exposed to was the one at school. The majority of the kids I grew up with were White Americans or Cubans Americans. I found myself having to constantly answer questions about who I was or where I came from. I also faced some discrimination from people who were not aware of what I stood for or what it meant to be a Palestinian.

Conversely, the participants in the study were born and raised in Illinois. Illinois is known for having a diverse population as well as a high concentration of Arabs living within a small radius of each other, especially Palestinian Arabs. Illinois is also home to Little Palestine. As a result, I believed that the participants may not have faced as much discrimination as an Arab would have faced living in the southern United States and with a lower concentration of Arabs. It is not so exotic to meet someone from a diverse background in a place that is a haven for diversity. For these regional differences alone, I was aware that my experiences growing up in the South may be completely opposite to the experiences of the participants growing up in the Midwest in terms of identity construction. In some aspects of the research, this proved to be true. For example, the participants also faced discrimination; however, the social clubs and networks created at their school and inside their community allowed the girls to forge a healthy way of dealing with the discrimination that was ubiquitous. It also allowed for the girls to be resilient in the face of the discrimination they experienced in their lives.
Another blind spot I had to account for is the factor of age. I am older than the participants and my priorities are related to family, whereas adolescents typically value the input of their peers above everything else. Therefore, I had to be aware of this bias and hold my judgments if the adolescents valued the input of their friends over their family in their identity construction. However, for this group of participants, this was not the case. While the girls valued their friendships, they put their family above all other dimensions of identity in their life, as is evident through the interview discussions and the artifacts chosen for the study. For example, three of the four participants chose to share pictures of their families as part of the artifacts that represent their identity.

Furthermore, as a Palestinian American with familial ties across the United States, I utilized the resources available to me to recruit participants. According to Glesne (2006), because of my ties with important members of the studied group, “access” was given through contact with “gatekeepers” (p. 44). In other words, I was given admission into the studied group due to my shared ethnic, religious, linguistic, and racial background. While I was given access into the studied group, rapport building was crucial in order to maintain trust between the participants and me (Glesne, 2006). For example, before the start of the first interview, the girls wanted to know about my background and the purposes of the study. They wanted to know that I was going to use the information gathered to help their identity group and not harm it.

Previous Experiences

My previous experiences in working with diverse populations also allowed me to keep my biases in check. There are two particular experiences that were most relevant to this study: a previous pilot study and my teaching experience. Before conducting my dissertation research, I completed a pilot study. Through the pilot study, I was able to identity and modify my dissertation research to ensure my positionality as a researcher would not cloud the results of the
study but instead, my position as a member of the studied group would enhance and enrich the data I collected from the participants. My belonging as a member of the studied group allowed me to gain access and build rapport with my research participants that allowed me to collect rich data about their identity experiences.

The other experience that supported me in reflecting on my research was my 13 years of teaching experience with diverse populations, specifically my last six years as an ESOL teacher. In the last six years, I worked in a title I district in a school that was majority English Language learners (EL). One of the top languages at the school site where I worked was Arabic. The Arabic speaking families mainly came from Iraq, Syria, and Palestine. The students mirrored the political situation in the United States. Arabs were emigrating from their homeland to the United States due to war in their countries. As a teacher and a researcher, I was afforded the opportunity to work with a number of first and second generation students. I witnessed firsthand how school policies and practices placed EL students at a disadvantage. For example, the lack of teacher knowledge about second language acquisition misplaced EL students in special education programs. I also came across students that were not placed in an EL program (based on the self-reported HLS or Home Language Survey) but identified as bicultural. While the literature, as well as this dissertation, posits that adolescence is the age where individuals begin to reflect on their identity and the impact it has over their overall identity construction, within the last couple of years, I had students as young as first grade afraid to speak their native language at school in light of sociopolitical events. Therefore, these experiences provided me with practice to work with this population of students and provided me with an understanding that more research needed to be carried out on this population of students. Teachers need to be aware of how to service Arab American students and how to provide them with the skill set needed to do more
than just survive in the United States. Moreover, the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that schools recognize the socioemotional part to teaching. Therefore, it is becoming more and more crucial that validating one’s home culture at school falls in line with this mandate. Overall, through reflection and researcher tools, I was careful not to allow my views to impact my research study.

**Reflective Journaling**

Another way to keep myself aware of unintended biases or blind spots is through journaling. Throughout the research process, I kept a journal wherein I wrote reflection notes about aspects of the research that I found myself having strong opinions about or ways of viewing aspects of the study as is evidenced in Table 3-14. I did this as a way of not influencing the participant responses. I wanted the participants to speak freely about their experiences. Table 3-14 below is a sample excerpt from the research journal I kept throughout the research process.
### Table 3-14. Excerpt from Researcher’s Reflective Journal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant &amp; Interview Session</th>
<th>Raw Notes</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit Interview Session #2</td>
<td>Spirit shared that she is in sports such as cheerleading and gymnastics; however, she also shared that she is religious (even more religious than her family from South Carolina). For example, one of her uncles married a “White” woman and Spirit said she has a hard time getting along with her because there is not much in common between her uncle’s wife and the rest of the family. Spirit is also conservative in wanting to wear the <em>hijab</em> following college.</td>
<td>Spirit is liberal in her outlook on playing sports, especially sports where the girls are required to wear revealing clothing such as cheerleading and gymnastics but she is more conservative in other parts of her life such as the requirement of wanting to wear the <em>hijab</em> when she gets married or the importance of wanting to marry a Palestinian Muslim. When it comes down to it, is it even about religion? Is it more about just having a connection with one part of her family over the other? Is it more about doing what she is allowed to do in her family and following suit so that she stays a part of how her family does things?</td>
<td>Allow Spirit to continue to speak freely about her experiences. Follow up with the discussion about how she thinks the South Carolina part of her family is more liberal “Americanized” than the Chicago part of her family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan Interview Session #1</td>
<td>Jordan shared that she loves the summers she spent in Jordan. However, she would never want to live overseas because the mentality of the people there are totally different. She says people overseas are more liberal while the Arab Americans in the States are always involved in every aspect of her life and they are more conservative in the way they live their life.</td>
<td>Is Jordan prejudice against the people from the homeland? Are the Palestinians overseas more liberal because they are living in a Muslim country where they feel they don’t have to worry about anything and they have a blind trust of their environment? Is her family more conservative in what they allow Jordan to do in the United States because they are distrustful of the American/Westernized environment around her?</td>
<td>Stay connected to Jordan’s interpretation of what is happening here. Follow up with this discussion in interview #2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant &amp; Interview Session</td>
<td>Raw Notes</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Next Steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey Interview Session #1</td>
<td>Halsey shared that she always tries to stay out of the drama and lay low. However, because of her identification as a Muslim she chose to speak out against the boy in her class that classified all Muslims as terrorists. The principal punished her and the boy for arguing in class.</td>
<td>The principal punished her and failed to validate the real reason behind the verbal disagreement. As much as Halsey wants to “stay out of drama” there is a self-advocacy piece that keeps Halsey in the middle of the “drama.” As a teacher and future leader, the way the principal handled the situation tells me he has no clue about Halsey’s background and he lacks cultural competence. The principal and possibly the school needs diversity training. I wonder how the culture of the school is. If the principal has no clue about diverse backgrounds, what does that mean for the diverse students at that school?</td>
<td>Continue to allow Halsey to speak freely. Focus on Halsey’s perception of what happened in the interaction between her, her male classmate, and the school principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Interview Session #2</td>
<td>Hope’s family wants their girls to have a separate wedding. However, Hope’s oldest sister is opening up a debate at home about having a mixed wedding. All the girls in Hope’s family does not wear hijab. Her parents don’t force it but her father gave her and her sisters until college to put on the hijab. Her oldest sister that is currently in college (first year) still does not wear the hijab.</td>
<td>There is a contradiction in the way this family practices their faith. They take a more liberal approach in some things such as wearing the hijab and allowing their oldest daughter to move away from the family for college and a more conservative approach on others such as forbidding a mixed wedding. Is the educational dimension of this family’s identity more salient than their religious one? It is human nature to be inconsistent. Religion is not a science. People practice their faiths in all kinds of ways.</td>
<td>Allow Hope to continue to speak freely about her experiences. Be careful when sharing how you practice religion (much more liberal approach) because I don’t want to dissuade her or influence her from sharing how she practices religion or Islam in her family.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another powerful tool for identifying bias was the peer review and debriefing with two professional contacts, which is discussed in further detail below.

Overall, I was aware of my blind spots throughout the duration of the study in order to not influence the data. Through my positionality statement and my reflection on my personal identity, reflection on my teaching experiences, reflective journaling, triangulation, peer review, and debriefing, I made sure my views did not shape my data collection and data analysis. Through these safeguards, I made sure my experiences did not undermine the fidelity of the data. I realize I might hold strong opinions about my experiences growing up as a Palestinian-Muslim female. I also realized that the participants in this study who identified in similar ways presented information that is counter to my beliefs; however, I mediated this by being reflective about my bias and using researcher tools to safeguard the research.

Quality of Study

In qualitative studies, when discussing ways to ensure the quality of the research study, terms such as trustworthiness and credibility replace terms like reliability and validity used in quantitative research endeavors (Golafshani, 2003). In order to guarantee the quality of the current study, the following procedures have been utilized to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the research: triangulation, peer review and debriefing, member checking, safety issues, and rapport building (Creswell, 2008).

Trustworthiness

In addition to laying out my position as a researcher, in order to maintain the trustworthiness of the study, I used multiple research procedures. One procedure I used to maintain the trustworthiness of the study was triangulation. I collected data from three sources in order to serve as checks and balances of the data set: individual interviewing, ratification
elicitation, and document collection. I also used peer review and debriefing with other colleagues to maintain the trustworthiness of the research study.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation refers to use of the multiple data collection and analysis methods utilized during the study, as well as the integration of multiple perspectives other than the main participants, such as that of teachers, parents, administrators, and friends (Glesne, 2006, p. 36). In this dissertation, there are three main methods of data collection for analysis: in-depth interviewing, artifact elicitation, and document analysis. Additionally, as part of in-depth interviewing, I interviewed the participants three times in order to truly capture the perceptions of identity as seen through the eyes of the participants.

Dauite and Lightfoot (2004) refer to the ideas of Solis and her study on illegality and identity construction. Solis states, “illustrations added strength to the message of a text and stood as a cultural means of expression that served to corroborate or check initial findings derived mainly from written and oral texts” (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, p. 189). For the purposes of this study, artifact elicitation allowed me to validate what the participants share on the road to their identity construction. Document analysis provides a context for the participants’ school life. The documents also confirm or deny whether the school culture is in line with the participant’s perspective of how school plays a role in their identity construction. The multiple methods of gathering data allows me to see authentic themes across the data and clarify any outliers that exist.

**Peer review and debriefing.** Peer review and debriefing is an important part of the research process because it requires someone outside of the research study to monitor the research process (Creswell, 2007). Throughout the study, I checked in with two other colleagues about any revelations and to provide updates to the research endeavor. The first colleague was
Dr. Elizabeth Pauls from the department of anthropology in the University of Iowa, who served as a peer reviewer. Dr. Pauls is currently the gifted specialist for the Northbrook school district in Illinois. I also shared my work with Dr. Nadia Hasan. Dr. Hasan is a professor of clinical psychology. I talked to Dr. Hasan throughout every step of the research process. During these “check in” sessions, I shared parts of the study with colleagues, such as transcripts, recorded interviews, thoughts, and initial codes that emerged from the data. The goal of these check-ins was to have an objective eye help me identify aspects of the research design that were repeated or absent from the analysis. These colleagues helped point out biases or assumptions made that may have created detrimental blind spots. I also shared revelations about my research with my dissertation advisor, Dr. Ester De Jong.

**Credibility**

Another aspect of research to consider when safeguarding the quality of the study is the credibility of the research. Credibility refers to the reliability of the research studied. For this study, procedures such as member checking, consideration of safety issues, and rapport building were utilized in order to ensure the credibility of the research.

**Member checking.** At the end of each interview session, participants were sent a copy of the transcripts. I asked the participants if their voice was accurately portrayed. The transcripts were sent back after each interview in order to confirm their responses, contributing to the credibility of the data through member checking (Glesne, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, throughout the data analysis process, I kept close contact with the participants and shared initial codes with them to verify that the codes accurately portray the participants’ perceptions of identity. At the conclusion of the data analysis stage, I shared final observations with the participants in order to maintain credibility of the research narrative.
Throughout this process, there were a couple of clarification corrections made. In one instance, after the first interview session, Spirit saw that the transcripts read that her paternal grandmother was living in Palestine, but in the interview she had said it was her maternal grandmother who lives in Palestine and whom she would visit when she visits the city of Ramallah. Additionally, after the second interview session, Spirit shared with me that OG stood for “Original Gangster” and not “Old Gangster,” a phrase that was used when she shared her artifact of the Dreamville Lanyard. Moreover, another correction made went beyond clarification; rather, it touched on interpretation. For example, Spirit, Jordan, and Hope shared that life overseas was different from life in the United States and they expressed that they would never want to live overseas. I initially coded this as “detachment to homeland” and right away all of the girls corrected me: they are very attached to their homeland; however, they were used to the life in the United States and it would be difficult for them to live overseas because it is not what they were used to, but they treasure the visits and memories they have of the homeland.

**Safety issues.** Another way of ensuring the credibility of research is through securing the safety of the participants. By completing the IRB process, the participants received an informed consent form that highlighted their rights as participants in the study. Additionally, I made the purpose of the study clear through the approved IRB assent form as well as communication during the interviews. I also shared with the participants at the start of each interview session that they had the right not to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable with. They could say “pass” whenever they came across a question they did not feel comfortable answering. I also told the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. For example, when participant Halsey was sharing her childhood memories during interview session one, she mentioned that when she was little, her mother was very sick. I asked her about her mother’s
illness and the participant paused and said “pass” because she did not want to share the details of her mother’s illness.

Moreover, I explained to the participants that the information shared with her would be for research purposes only, mainly for the purposes of her dissertation. I also emphasized that this information would not affect their schoolwork or grades or be reported back to their teachers or parents. Finally, I made it clear that they would have pseudonyms when they referenced in the study. The participants and I together came up with a pseudonym that represented a piece of their identity. In one interview, Spirit hesitated when she began sharing about the conflict she faced with members of the Diversity Club. I reminded her that I would not share this personal information with anybody at school and that I would use her pseudonym when I reference her in the study. She felt safe and continued to share her experiences with me.

As a researcher in a backyard research setting, I am a part of the studied group. As a result, it is difficult to define when the role as a researcher ends and the role as a member resumes (Glesne, 2006, p.33). Consequently, participants could be resistant to answering personal or “dangerous knowledge” questions in the presence of a member of the group (Glesne, 2006, p. 31). Moreover, since September 11 and recent political events, the political climate in the United States is hostile towards Palestinians and Muslims. In a study conducted by researchers Moradi and Hasan (2004), it was reported Arab Americans felt an increase in discrimination towards their ethnic group; furthermore, the perceptions of discrimination affected their mental health and self-esteem. Consequently, while my position as a member of this group helped me to gain access, it was important to be aware of the potential hesitancy of participants to share private information regarding their personal religious and political beliefs.
Therefore, throughout the interview process, I made clear that the participants did not have to answer any questions that were uncomfortable with.

While the participants and their families were hesitant to be a part of the study, I shared the purpose of the study as well as the contribution their interviews will make towards identity research that will benefit—not harm—second-generation Palestinian-American Muslim adolescents. Additionally, the IRB consent and assent forms were shared with the participants and their parents and I emphasized that the research gathered from this study is confidential and their identities will be anonymous.

**Rapport building.** Rapport building is crucial in qualitative research. Participants must feel comfortable to share information that is relevant to the research study. It was pivotal for me to be sensitive to the personal nature of the information provided during the interview process (Glesne, 2006). Moreover, due to the political climate wherein hot topics such as the executive order that “bans Muslims” from entering the United States as well as new laws that prohibit the use of electronic devices on flights leaving to and from Muslim countries dominate the media, the families of the adolescents were more cautious than usual in participating in the study (Mullen & Thompson, 2017). Rapport building was a crucial step in combatting this hesitancy and in gaining the trust of the participants and the families involved.

In order to build trust and combat hesitancy, I reassured the participants and their families that their names will be replaced with pseudonyms, so they will remain anonymous, and the purpose of the study is for research only. Also, the interactions between researcher and participant over the course of the three interview sessions, along with the multiple interactions during scheduling and member checking, contributed to rapport building as well (Glesne, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seidman, 2006).
Furthermore, the research participants felt more comfortable sharing their experiences with me once I disclosed I was also a member of their religious and ethnic group. All of the research participants asked questions about my background before the start of the first session. The girls asked about where I was born, what city I was from, if I was married, if I had children, if I worked, why I was conducting this study, and why the study was important to me. Once I answered their questions at the start of the first session, the participants were cooperative and even eager to be a part of the study. They were glad that someone was studying their group in a positive way.

Hope shared that every time something happens in the news that portrays Arabs and Muslims in a bad light, the next day, media crews were on the doorsteps of her all-girl Islamic high school. She shared that the interview questions they shout at the principal and the dean assume negative intent. Hope went on to say that after President Donald Trump declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel, news crews were outside of her school demanding to know how Arabs and Muslims felt about this declaration of peace. In effect, by saying Trump’s action was a declaration of peace, on the flipside, Palestinians are not for peace. Moreover, Hope demanded to know what I would do with the information from the interviews with her and school visits. I was transparent in telling all the participants the information will benefit identity research for Arabs and Muslims and not to cast judgement. Additionally, Hope said she felt safe when her friend (the henna artist who initially shared her contact information) reassured her that I was different because I was Palestinian. In conclusion, these methods helped me to maintain trustworthiness and credibility in the study.

Limitations of Research

An important step in the research process is reflection and awareness of the limitations of the research endeavor. Some limitations can be reviewed and altered throughout the research
while others cannot be modified. Nonetheless, it is important to be aware of these boundaries. An important limitation of the present study is the difficulty in gathering information related to sensitive topics such as sexual orientation and class. Traditionally, in Muslim and Arab culture, it is frowned upon to openly discuss these private topics; therefore, before conducting the study, I wondered if the participants would discuss these topics in an authentic manner or if they would provide a socially and culturally acceptable answer. It is my role to emphasize the anonymity of the participants as a way to comfort the interviewees and encourage them to share sensitive information. There were areas, such as social class and future marriage goals that the girls were open about; however, there were also areas in discussion that the girls were not as comfortable speaking about. The topics that made them uncomfortable were related to partying, dating, drinking alcohol, and sex on the part of the other students in their class.

I found the girls felt comfortable in sharing their personal information with me related to their family’s social class and their future marriage goals. Once rapport was built, the girls shared their economic status as well as their personal goals. For example, Jordan shared that her father is a businessman. She also shared that he had a couple of failed attempts at business. Halsey also shared that her father has a four-year degree but he works for Amazon delivering packages. Similarly, Jordan also shared that her mother works part-time as a lunch aide in an elementary school.

Moreover, all four participants were not shy in sharing that their personal goal was to get married as well. In Palestinian culture, it is not typical for a girl or boy to be so direct and open about what they want in terms of marriage; however, the girls felt relaxed in sharing their personal goals with me. Factors that contributed to this comfort was rapport building as well as the reassurance that they will have pseudonyms in the research and the information was not
going to be shared outside of the research study. They also found solace and pride in the fact that their stories could help other girls with a similar identity as them.

One area of the research where the participants struggled to explicate on sensitive information was in regards to topics such as partying, dating, drinking alcohol, and sex. For example, three out of the four girls talked about a critical moment they had when they entered middle school. It was in middle school when they began to notice differences between themselves and their classmates. Those differences continued into high school. For example, when I asked Spirit what were those differences she said that other students do things that are haram, or activities that are forbidden in Islam. When I asked her to share some of the activities that set them apart from herself, she had a difficult time expressing herself. Similarly, Jordan also shared how uncomfortable she felt when students at her high school talked about dating and sexual encounters or showed public displays of affection (PDA). She said it made her want to “exit the premises,” and she didn’t want to go into much detail about what was talked about or what she saw in terms of PDA. Finally, Halsey just talked about the differences by saying other students did “bad” things. She also did not want to go into detail. In the following chapters, the data gathered through interviews, artifacts and documents will be presented in narrative form.
CHAPTER 4
THE PARTICIPANTS

As I walked through the hallways of the library to find a quiet spot to sit, I noticed the pictures on the walls were diverse and acknowledged their growing Arab and Muslim population in the area. Figure 4-1 is a picture located on one of the narrow hallways as you walk into the library past the front checkout counters. It is near the elevators. It was a poster that was enclosed in a plastic case and mounted on the wall, and the message on the poster is inclusive of all types of learners, including Muslims as is evidenced by the girl in the illustration wearing a hijab while holding the world.

Figure 4-1. A picture posted in the public library where I met all four girls for the study. Additionally, Figure 4-2 was a poster that was located near the water fountain on the second floor. In this poster, it acknowledges language differences as it has the phrase “libraries are for everyone” written in English, Spanish, Polish, and Arabic.
Finally, Figure 4-3 is a picture of the bilingual books in Arabic on the children’s side of the library. The girls and I walked past it on our way to an empty table to conduct the interviews.

Three of the four participants attended an American public high school. The fourth participant attended a private all-Islamic girl school. The first three participants—Spirit, Jordan, and Halsey—share many of the same experiences. In contrast, the last participant, Hope, served as a
contrasting experience in relation to the first three participants. Below is a narrative of each of
the four participants and the major themes that emerged as a result of the data.

**Spirit**

_They think like all Muslims do all that stuff but like nobody really understands so you just stay quiet so like it just like burns us inside. There’s nothing you can do but just stay quiet because they don’t really understand._ (personal communication, December 26, 2017)

-Spirit

The quote above summarizes many of the experiences Spirit has faced in her life since
to classroom discussions that happened at school in regards to crimes carried out by individuals that
happen to be Arab and Muslim. Spirit struggled to fight stereotypes about Muslims and Arabs.
She tried to share that she is American too even though she is Muslim and identifies as
Palestinian. Spirit was a second generation Palestinian-American Muslim female that is
originally from the Palestinian city of Yaffa. She self-identifies as a Palestinian Southern
American Muslim. She said she is a Southern American because her family originally
immigrated to South Carolina before they moved to Illinois. She still has family that lives in
South Carolina, and she cannot forget that side of her because the way of life in South Carolina
is much different than life in the state of Illinois. Following Seidman’s (2006) three series
interview model, Spirit shared her life experiences beginning with her past to the present and
ending with her future goals for herself. Her life story to date is illustrated below.

**Past**

Spirit shared what life was like growing up in her home. Below is a discussion of salient
aspects of Spirit’s childhood and summer visits to Palestine. Spirit also shared her elementary
and middle school experiences.
**Childhood memories.** Spirit and her family used to live in South Carolina before they moved to Illinois to be closer to family and opportunity. Her family moved to Illinois when Spirit was three years old, but she said she has clear memories of her life in South Carolina. She also visits South Carolina often to visit the family that never left. For Spirit, South Carolina is a place just like any other; however, the reason why it was special to her is because of her family. Spirit shared that her life in South Carolina was more family-centered. She was really close with her immediate family because there were no other Arabs in her surrounding community that she could relate to other than her relatives. In fact, one of the artifacts Spirit chose to share as a representation of her identity was a picture of herself when she was one year old, her mother, and older sister when she was three years old in South Carolina. I decided not to publish the picture for privacy purposes because it shows a picture of her mother without her hijab. Spirit said if she had to assign this artifact a hashtag, she would call it #growingup.

**Summer visits to Palestine.** Spirit shared her favorite memories of Eid are dressing up, looking good, and taking pictures. Her favorite Eid was last year when she went to the Tinley Park Convention Center that holds up to 3,000 people for Salat al-Eid (Eid prayer) and then to dinner with her family at the Chama steakhouse. She then went to her cousin’s house to “like, chill for the rest of the day” (Spirit, personal communication, December 18, 2017). Spirit also shared her least favorite Eid was when she was visiting Palestine. She shared that the last time she visited Palestine was in 2015, “the Eid there is so boring. I hate it there. It’s so bad ‘cause [sic], like, they’re just so used to just sitting around and just, like, waiting for people to come over. They don’t expect to, like, do something fun” (Spirit, personal communication December 18, 2017). Spirit said the way her family celebrates Eid in Palestine was through a strict
schedule. She said life in *Falestine* felt isolated, and there was nothing to do and food is very limited because everyone cooks at home. It is not typical to go out to eat.

When she goes back home, she visits her grandmother, who currently lives in Ramallah. When she returns to *Falestine*, she cannot visit her hometown of Yaffa because it is under Israeli occupation. Also, even though she has an American passport, she has a *hawiyah*, or a Palestinian Identification card, which means she cannot enter Israeli territories, such as Yaffa. When she was a little girl, she visited Yaffa before she was issued her Palestinian *hawiyah*, which was evidence of her Palestinian lineage and her right to own land in Palestine. She expressed wanting to visit her two aunts that live in Yaffa but she is not allowed in Israel without a visa. Spirit said that some people sneak in and she would be willing to do that because it is important to see her family. I told her that she could be taking a risk and that she would get sent back by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) if she didn’t get imprisoned. Spirit said, “It’s easy though. They never look ‘cause, like, if you only take your American passport, they don’t really ask for anything else. They just look at it and you just drive. You’re kind of, like, used to it. We would never bring our *hawiyah* with us” (Spirit, personal communication, December 18, 2017).

**Elementary and middle school.** Spirit said if you find her elementary school time capsule, you would probably find a little pony named Spirit and books probably about Clifford the red dog. She loved the movie and television show called “Spirit” about a brown stallion that could not be tamed and goes on adventures in the Western frontier. Spirit said she also loved to read, especially about Clifford. That is how we came up with her pseudonym for this study. She wanted to be named Spirit after her favorite television character.

Elementary school was a fun time in Spirit’s life. She said she had three really good friends whom she thought were inseparable; however, as they grew up things changed. Spirit
expressed that middle school was the time when she made a completely set of new friends, specifically in seventh grade. She didn’t stay in touch with any of her friends from elementary school. She is still friends with the girls she made friends with in seventh grade and most of them are Palestinian-Muslim females although she does have a diverse group of acquaintances.

**Present**

Spirit discussed her high school experiences in an American public school. Spirit’s family also had a large impact on her identity construction. Finally, Spirit shared how her sociopolitical context influenced how she saw the world in relation to her identity development. Below illustrates the present experiences in Spirit’s life as it relates to her identity construction.

**High school.** Spirit is currently 17, and she takes more than the allotted credit amount required each semester to complete high school early. As a result, Spirit has senior status on her high school campus as a junior. She said she cannot wait to leave high school. During my school visit, the vice principal of Spirit’s school expressed that if you look at the school’s enrollment statistics, Palestinian girls were always the group at the top of the list for graduating early. She speculated that maybe school is not challenging enough for the girls or maybe the girls are worried they might get married at a young age the way she did so they want to make sure they complete as much education as they can before an eligible suitor comes and they are married. I asked Spirit why she was graduating early, and she said she wanted to graduate early because,

> I feel like high school is like a really stupid part of my life and it just flew by. Like I really didn’t learn anything from it and I’d rather just move on ‘cause [sic] I feel like I would just learn more away from that environment. Uhm, it feels like more of a jail than like than like a [sic] everyday like comfy environment and it just gets harder and harder every day. (Spirit, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

However, Spirit does speak fondly of her involvement in groups such as the diversity club, also known as the *debka* club. She also made it a point to share with me that she plays sports such as gymnastics, cheer, basketball and soccer. Spirit is deeply involved in her *debka* club. She even
shared with me a concern she had with some of the girls in the club. She said some of the girls become really competitive and they get upset if they are not picked to be a lead dancer and if they are not chosen to perform at concerts. Spirit shared that the girls, “like to start stuff, like, for formations and stuff and, like, yeah and, like, that’s all. Like, if they’re like not in front, they’ll like…They, like, talk behind each other’s backs and, like, they purposefully make sure you’re not in any dances or, like, if you do one thing they will like go tell or something” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). The way she dealt with the conflict is, “just mind my business, do me” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). Spirit admitted that sometimes she will tell the club advisor, but she usually keeps to herself when this happens because she is a good dancer and the other girls are jealous of her Dabke skills. She also shared that it doesn’t matter what the girls do to sabotage each other because in the end, one’s dabke skills will speak for itself and that’s all that really matters, is one’s talent. The discussion above showed how involved and connected Spirit is with the Diversity Club. The club is also a source of pride and confidence for her. For example, earlier, Spirit referenced how she stays quiet during classroom discussions when Muslims are talked about in a negative light, but here, Spirit speaks up about the competitiveness of the other girls. This showed that she is invested in the Diversity Club, and the fact that she feels comfortable speaking up to her club advisor shows that she thinks she has a chance of bringing about change. This also revealed that she felt she has a voice in the happenings of the club and that her voice matters and could potentially change things. In fact, one of the artifacts Spirit chose to share with me as a representation of her identity was a satin hutta Palestinia, or a Palestinian scarf she wears during her performances with the diversity club (see Figure 4-4 below). Spirit said the hutta is important to her because, “it reminds me of like music and happiness and debka” (Spirit, personal communication, December
Spirit admitted that she usually kept to herself throughout the school day. She had a mix of friends; however, she got along with other Palestinian girls the most. When I inquired as to why she thinks this to be true she said that people outside of the culture don’t understand the mannerisms, traditions, customs, and language. She said it was just easier because you don’t have to explain everything to them, “They just know” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017).

Similarly, Spirit expressed not feeling connected to the school, teachers, administrators, or students. She said she likes to stay professional with the teachers because she doesn’t want her grades to be influenced by her teacher’s perception of her. She also shared that every time she does try to get close, she feels like the teachers do not understand her. Finally, she shared that she also cannot connect with the administrators. She admitted that some of them like the principal are nice but, “The deans could care less. You could tell some are racist. You just gotta [sic] mind your own business” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). She also
shared that overall the school culture in terms of the student population is mixed. She said there are some girls that you can relate with; however, “Some are just ignorant and you just, like, don’t care for them but yeah. There’s a lot of people. You could find a lot of people that are like you and you can relate to” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). When asked what words of advice she would leave for her fellow students in her high school yearbook, she said she would leave no words of advice. Spirit said that in order to leave words of advice for the upcoming classes, she would have to care, and she just doesn’t care about her high school experience.

**Family.** Spirit loves her family but she admitted that there were things in her family that bother her, just like in any family. For example, the worst fight she has ever engaged in with a family member was with her mother because of her brother. She said she bought a cat, but it made a mess everywhere, and her little brother wouldn’t leave the cat alone so her mother decided to return the cat. She said she fought with her mom for a solid week because she really wanted to keep the cat, but in the end, she understood where her mother was coming from. In fact, Spirit deemed her mother to be her best friend. In terms of her father, she said he is strict and has a short temper. Her mother is a stay-at-home mom and the highest level of education she finished was high school in South Carolina. However, her dad works as he owns a restaurant in Houston, Texas as well as other stores in Illinois, and one of them is a tobacco store. Her mother and father both have a high school education.

Spirit shared that the dynamics in her family is a little precarious. For example, her mother’s side is not very religious. She attributed this to the environment in South Carolina where they lived. She said, “there’s not a really much, like, religious connections over there. It’s just like American style,” and this explained why she thinks her mother’s sister, who still lives in
South Carolina, is Americanized and the women on her mother’s side do not cover or wear the hijab (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). She said her mother is more religious and she cares about staying in touch with Palestinian culture and that happened after she moved to Illinois. Spirit shared that her father’s younger brother recently moved from South Carolina to Illinois and her aunt is White and has a hard time blending with the family. Spirit said, “She likes being to herself like just, like, how she used to be, like, you know, like, over there [South Carolina]. You don’t really care to talk to people. You’re, like, to yourself more” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). Spirit’s mother and another one of her aunts are “decently religious” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). She shared that they both wear the hijab and they go the mosque and pray, but she gets frustrated with her aunt, or as she refers to her, “her uncle’s wife” because her actions do not match up with her religious persona.

Another artifact Spirit shared as a representation of her identity was a lanyard that said Dreamville on it. The lanyard is shown in Figure 4-5 below.

Figure 4-5. A lanyard with the words Dreamville on it, which is the company that produces the music of rapper J. Cole. This lanyard represents Spirit’s love for J. Cole’s music and represents a piece of her identity.

Spirit explained that Dreamville is a company that produces the music of her favorite rapper J. Cole. She shared that her favorite song is “Hold it Down” because, “he talks about like how his life was and how he had to like hold it down for his whole family and like carry through” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). Spirit that if she had to assign a hashtag to this
lanyard it would OG for Original Gangster. Spirit became interested in the lyrics of J. Cole since middle school and she said his music has become a part of her. She also expressed that out of the four artifacts she shared with me, the lanyard was the most important. Ultimately, she chose the lanyard because she said it’s important to her because people come and go but J. Cole’s music has been with her through every experience that has happened in her life just like her family.

**Sociopolitical context.** Spirit admitted that her family continues to stay well connected to Palestine with the last time her entire family traveled was the year of 2015. They typically travel every other summer. Nevertheless, “Even though if it’s been a long time, I always feel like I’ve been there like a month ago, and, like, we FaceTime my grandma a lot so it’s like we always stay up-to-date with everything that is going on” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). One of the artifacts Spirit chose to represent her identity was a gold necklace with a pendant in the shape of Palestine. In the center of the pendant is a hollow heart shape. She said she wears it every day. Spirit said this necklace is important to her because, “it reminds me of, like, Palestine and, like, everything that’s going on, and when I wear it I feel, like, like safe or, like, like that I have something a part of me or, like, it just like represents me and ,like, I, I never see myself not wearing it. Like, I just really like it” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). Figure 4-6 below is a photograph of the necklace that was taken in the library during the second interview session with Spirit. If Spirit had to assign her necklace a hashtag, it would be #roots because the necklace represents her cultural heritage.

Figure 4-6. This figure shows a gold necklace with a pendant in the shape of Palestine. In the center of the pendant is a hollow heart shape. This necklace is another one of the artifacts Spirit chose to represent her identity.
Spirit FaceTimes her grandmother through her father’s phone once a week. However, Spirit does not stay connected in ways via the news or social media because, “I don’t really like to read or, like, associate with things online ‘cause I feel like it’s always fake or like it’s not always true, so I like to stay away from, like, the TV and all that stuff” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). Spirit gets frustrated when she watches the news because she said people use one person who is a member of a group, like being Muslim, and, “They, like, put the title over everybody else ‘cause it’s only, like, that one person,” so for this reason, she stays away from American media and politics in general (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). Spirit said this is also true of her family. They stay away from politics, social media, and the news; however, it is important to Spirit’s parents that she identify as Palestinian and Muslim because, “if I have something that has to do with, like, the jamaa’ah [mosque in Arabic] or like, like a convention they like me going or, like, doing debka, like, representing Falestine and stuff like that” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017).

I shared with Spirit that I visited her school and looked at school documents, such as the club list and posters on the wall, and I got a sense that the school culture was pretty open to other cultures and it seemed to be diverse. I asked her how she felt about her school culture and what she had to say about the school documents, and she shared that the school seems pretty open and accepting on the outside, but when you go inside the classrooms and listen to discussions, it doesn’t always appear to be as tolerant as portrayed in the school documents. Spirit said that you can tell how a school really is when something bad happens and how the school deals with it. For example, in the midst of my research, on Wednesday, December 6th, 2017, President Donald Trump made headlines when he declared Jerusalem the official capital of Israel. I asked Spirit and the other participants how this made them feel, and Spirit shared that the environment in
school was supportive. Everyone who was of Arab origin, and some teachers and students who were not Arab, wore the Palestinian *hutta* to support the cause. However, she wished that people would show support even on days when something significant doesn’t happen in the news. Spirit said,

I wish it wasn’t just because of something happened I wish it was on the daily that they would support and it’s like you know who the people of like you know the people who only do it just for show and from the people who actually mean it from their heart. I don’t know. Like you can just tell they only do it like they like you know the people who have never been there [Palestine] before never know anything like who don’t even like have never even been in a plane before to even like…like I don’t know. You just know. (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

**Future**

In the third interview, Spirit discussed her future plans. Spirit’s college, career, and marriage plans are detailed below. Spirit also discussed how religion impacts her life choices, such as the decision to wear the *hijab*. Finally, Spirit shared potential challenges in accomplishing her goals.

**College, career, and marriage plans.** Spirit’s future goals are to become a nurse. Spirit voiced that her sister is a person whom she respects. She is her role model and she feels that she has to do the same things her sister did and more. Her sister has already paved the way for who she wants to become as she respects her sister’s choices in life, and Spirit’s sister has a large impact on her life. She also believed that her parents believe in her potential and they know she has a strong future ahead of her and see her becoming a nurse in the future. She said her friends also know that she puts plenty of effort into her work and trust she will achieve her goals in life. However, Spirit herself worries from time to time about achieving her goals because she is worried about,

being on top of my grades and studying and like talking to people. Uhm. Cause I get like anxiety. A lot. With like uhm, presentations and like, like being put on the
spot or like having to talk when I’m not comfortable and yeah. So I’m gonna try to avoid [speaking in public]. (Spirit, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Spirit already has plans of attending the local community college for two years and then transferring to a private university near her family’s home to complete her bachelor’s degree in nursing. Spirit’s parents are conservative and do not approve of her moving outside of the home to attend school. Spirit also expressed that one of her future goals is to get married but probably not until she at least begins college.

**Religion.** Spirit believed that after she gets married she will think deeply about putting on the *hijab* (head scarf). She shared that her sister was still in nursing school and was engaged to be married, so she has had conversations with her about putting on the *hijab*. She said,

I was actually thinking about it. Like if my…my sister asked me if she did it would I do it and I said like yeah why not? But like actually being serious I probably wouldn’t do it until after I get married and my family like doesn’t force it or anything it’s like up to me. (Spirit, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Spirit shared that she feels wearing the *hijab* will change her entire life in terms of,

like my outfits. Like pictures how people see me like worrying about having it on like I feel like it’d be A LOT especially cause like what I want to do in college and like I feel like I wouldn’t be able to like handle everything so I’d rather be safe than take it off like when I when I put it on cause I’m just like putting it on to put it on like I want to put it on and be 100%. (Spirit, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

She also expressed wanting to have her hair down for her wedding and having a mixed wedding, and when you wear the *hijab*, she believed you cannot do those things. Finally, Spirit believed wearing the *hijab* is a big responsibility and she wants to make sure that when she decides to put it on, it is for life. She explains that her mother put it on “later in life” or after she got married in her early twenties and she wants to make sure that she is sure about it too.

**Future challenges.** Ultimately, Spirit imagines that all the pieces of her identity will not be a challenge for her in achieving her future goals. She believed that all the parts of her identity
such as being female, Muslim, second generation, and Palestinian American will be an advantage for her over other students her age. She said, “Honestly, I feel like it’d be an advantage ‘cause, like, it’s not basic, but, like, I don’t know. I feel like I am special” (Spirit, personal communication, January 2, 2018). For example, Spirit’s mother named her after a girl she went to high school with in Amman. Spirit said her name is a unique part of who she is and it sets her apart from others in a positive way.

**Jordan**

*When you get into high school it’s worse than elementary and middle school when it comes to differences. Like high school is just a whole new world. It’s a whole new world. The parties are worse. The conversations are worse…. I don’t know, personally I feel uncomfortable...you want to like exit the premises. (personal communication, December 26, 2017)*

-Jordan

The quote above is in response to Jordan’s experience in high school. She shared how it is much different than her elementary and middle school experiences in the fact that she began to notice differences between herself and her peers that made it hard for her to fit in. Jordan is a second generation Palestinian-American Muslim female that is originally from the Palestinian city of Ein Seinia. All of her family now lives in the U.S.A. and Amman, Jordan. The last time she visited Ein Seinia was when she was an infant. None of her family still lives in Palestine due to a series of civil wars with Israel. This is why she chose Jordan as her pseudonym. Jordan self-identifies as a second generation Palestinian-American Muslim educator. She shared that she loves children, and one day she wants to become an elementary school teacher and that is why she identifies as an educator. Jordan’s life story to date is illustrated below.
Past

Jordan shared what life was like growing up in her home. Below is a discussion of Jordan’s childhood memories. Jordan also shared her experiences living bicoastal between the United States and Jordan. Jordan also shared her elementary and middle school experiences.

Childhood memories. Jordan was born and raised in Illinois. Her most memorable childhood memory were going to the park next to her house with her older sister. Jordan admitted that it’s wasn’t easy being the youngest child in a family because she felt she was always “babied.” Additionally, she felt like she grew up an only child because there was a large gap between her age and her siblings.

A piece of Jordan’s childhood that was unsettling was when her grandparents, her father’s parents, resettled in Amman, Jordan. Her mother’s parents and family members never left Amman, and her maternal grandfather died when she was an infant. Jordan’s paternal grandparents used to live with them; however, they decided to go back to Amman, and that was a trying time in Jordan’s life because she was very close to them. It was even more difficult when her grandparents moved away and her grandfather died overseas. She shared with me he recently passed away. She said they can always go and visit her grandparents, but now, only her grandmother does, but it’s not the same because daily life in Illinois became much different in her grandparents’ absence. Jordan shared that her grandfather loved Palestine and he would always share the stories of his life when he used to live there. He no longer lived there because he had to flee during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Before he passed away he lived in Amman with her grandmother. She said her grandmother never knew anything other than Amman, so she doesn’t mention life in Palestine. If Jordan got the chance to see her grandfather again, she would ask him more questions about his life in Palestine. She said,
My grandfather was obsessed with Falestine. He has a... he had a house in Falestine. My grandma was more so the Amman it’s like cause like they all live on the same street in Amman it’s her house and her brother’s house and her sister’s house and so she loves that environment but if it was up to my grandpa he would live in Falestine in a heartbeat. I would definitely ask what was it like why he loved it so much. What was his lifestyle there? How... what’s...’cause like he used to live there at one point and he lived here at one point and what’s the differences between here and there. (Jordan, personal communication, December 18, 2017)

Jordan’s family visits Amman every summer.

The United States versus Jordan. If Jordan was given the opportunity to live anywhere, she said she would pick the United States because,

I see their [people in Amman] lifestyle is very different than ours. I mean it’s fun to visit and go out and stuff but like education-wise... mentality-wise... the way they think is definitely different than... I feel like Muslims out here... Like say girls and guys going out oh it’s okay over there you know like it’s, it’s a normal thing like you’ll see it and everyone’s so blinded by it but over here you see a Arabi girl and guy sitting and it’s just... everybody jumping to conclusions. So it’s like definitely different mentality of the way people think. I mean I love living here. I love it. Have you been to Bridgeview? Yeah, it’s called Little Palestine on like Google Maps. Yeah, like you feel it. (Jordan, personal communication, December 18, 2017)

Jordan said that even though she feels like she has more freedom in Amman, she loves living in the United States because she knows her limits. I asked her why she thought she had more freedom when she visits Amman, and she said,

When we go out there like my mom like if I tell her I’m going out with my cousin she’ll just definitely be like, ‘okay yeah go have fun. We’ll see you later.’ Over here, it’s like I want to go to the library, ‘okay, who are you going with? Who’s going to be there? How long are you staying?’ like you know? I feel like she has more trust out there because there’s Arab. It’s... it’s better out here because we know our limits. I feel like out there they think... they think we’re so free here but it’s kind of more so they are when it comes to like going out and stuff because we have like American people out here so our parents don’t really trust... they trust us but they don’t trust the people around us. Out there it’s all Arab. (Jordan, personal communication, December 18, 2017)

Jordan compares the Eid celebrations to the United States with her experience in Amman.

Jordan believed the Eid celebrations in the United States are so boring. However, her parents try
to make them fun by taking the family downtown. She said last year’s Eid was fun because her parents took her and her siblings to the Skydeck, but even so, she said that Eid was about family, and most of her family lives in Amman with the exception of one uncle. Jordan also said that Eid is boring here because,

You don’t really feel the culture. Like it’s like a normal day. You have to call off school. You have to like besides going to the mall the day before and seeing all the Arab [plural word of Arab in Arabic] having their Eid outfits last minute you don’t really feel the Eid like. I don’t know. (Jordan, personal communication, December 18, 2017)

During the second interview with Jordan, I asked her to share some artifacts that represented her identity. Two of her artifacts led me back to her childhood. The first artifact she shared was a silver necklace (that she wore as we were speaking) that had her name written in Arabic on a nameplate. She said her mother brought it back for her from the country of Jordan. She said she hasn’t taken the necklace off ever since her mother gave it to her, and if she had to assign the necklace a hashtag, it would be #memories because it reminded her of all the good times she has in the summer when she visits family in Amman.

The second artifact is a picture of her eating molokhia (jute leaf dish served with White rice and chicken). She said it wasn’t always her favorite dish, but it is today. She brought it because every time she looks at this picture, it reminds her of her childhood memories and a simpler time in her life. If she would assign the picture a hashtag, it would be #childhood. While Jordan shared an electronic copy of the picture and image of the necklace, I chose not to publish the artifacts for privacy purposes. Finally, Jordan said the artifact that is most special to her is her nameplate in Arabic because it is a daily reminder of back home. Also, her father named her after the title of his favorite Arabic song, and she always receives compliments on the uniqueness of her name, which gives her a positive feeling.
**Elementary and middle school.** During her elementary school days, Jordan was an extrovert. She had a lot of friends, everyone in school knew her, and she was involved in the patrol. She said part of the reason why she was more outgoing in elementary school was because she was involved in so many activities and she knew everyone at her school. Jordan used to live on the same street as her elementary school, so it was easier for her to be involved in activities because she lived so close. Another reason she believed she was outgoing is because life as a child is much different compared to when you get older,

I don’t know it’s just like everything is better when you’re a younger age. Like you don’t think the same way you do when you’re older. Like you don’t take things into consideration. It’s just like you’re living you’re going with the flow. You’re like a child. (Jordan, personal communication, December 18, 2017)

Jordan also had a lot of friends in elementary school. She said her friends in elementary school were much different than the friends she has today. She said all her friends in elementary school were White girls, and the only Arab she talked to in elementary school was a Palestinian boy. She said she was friends with him until recently when he made the decision to drop out of high school. There was one White girl she was very close to, and that was because Jordan’s mother trusted her mom,

I used to be with her every day. I remember and my mom trusted her mom a lot. My mom wouldn’t really let me hang out with other people that were White because of like…not because of anything but because of different lifestyles. Like their parents drink. Their parents…it’s okay to have your guy friends over and it’s not okay for us. (Jordan, personal communication, December 18, 2017)

Jordan and her former friends pulled away from each other over the years. She believed it was due to,

Uhm, different lifestyles. They started even I remember sixth grade even it started that young for them just I remember…like the parties and the drinking and the boys and it’s just like you come to a point to where you can’t really explain why you can’t do it and at the same time there is a point of embarrassment to where it’s like, ‘Oh, they’re all doing it. Oh, come with us.’ ‘Oh, I can’t. Oh, it’s haram (forbidden in Islam). Oh, it’s my parents. Oh, its…’ It’s…it’s just a lot of things so you just
kind of distance yourself so you don’t have to put yourself in awkward situations or situations where you know that, that they offer you something...or you stay away from situations where you don’t have to pass it up because if you’re not there, there is nothing you have to turn down. (Jordan, personal communication, December 18, 2017)

In elementary school, Jordan said she loved sports, especially the Chicago Bulls and everything Michael Jordan. She also loved stuffed animals, so if she had an elementary school time capsule, she would include something to do with basketball and a stuffed animal. While elementary school was a fond time in Jordan’s childhood, she also feels that middle school wasn’t so bad either. Things began to really shift in her life once she entered high school. In fact, the last artifact Jordan shared with me during her second interview was varsity letters from her middle school. Figure 4-7 below is a picture of that artifact. She said if she had to assign the letters a hashtag, it would be #middleschool. I asked her why the letters were so important, and she said compared to high school, middle school was a better time in her life. It was when she started making lifelong friends and everything was easier in terms of socializing and academics.

![Figure 4-7](image)

Figure 4-7. This figure is a picture of Jordan’s artifact. They represent a piece of her identity. They are the varsity letters of her middle school. She assigned it #middleschool to represent a simpler time in her childhood.

Present

Jordan discussed her high school experiences in an American public school. Jordan’s family also had a large impact on her identity construction. Finally, Jordan shared how her
sociopolitical context influenced how she saw the world in relation to her identity development. Below illustrates present experiences in Jordan’s life as they related to her identity construction.

**High school.** Jordan’s favorite subject in school was English because, “I love anything with a story behind it” (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017). She also loved reading and writing. Her least favorite subjects in school were math and history. She said those were her least favorite subjects because the teachers were tough graders. Also, in history class, she wondered whose history was being taught to her. She wished she would learn more about the history of the Arabs as well. Therefore, it was difficult for her to keep herself engaged in class. Finally, math and history were taught at a very fast paced, and she needs more time to process because she was more of a “one-on-one learner.”

Additionally, Jordan’s mom takes a role in Jordan’s education by dropping her off at school every day. Jordan said her time with her mom is in the mornings on her way to school. Also, Jordan has a very busy schedule as a high school student. She gets up an hour early for an extra class, so she has nine classes in a day as opposed to eight. She has been following this schedule for the past two years in order to graduate early. Jordan is also a part of her school’s diversity club, which is also known as the *debka* club. She practices two days a week and she works two days a week as a homework tutor with Kumon to elementary-aged school children. There are only three evenings out of the week where she is home, and those days are reserved for completing homework. Jordan said she spends those three days in her basement getting her work down and decompressing from the week. She said in order to function, she needs “me” time to recharge and face another week. However, some weekdays and weekends, Jordan performs at different venues throughout Illinois with her *debka* club. They mainly perform at colleges and universities around town, such as the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), DePaul, and
Benedictine. For example, the *debka* club performed at this year’s American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) conference during Thanksgiving break. Overall, Jordan shared that high school is hard in terms of socializing and academics. She said,

> Mmmmm. You feel very looked at differently for the reasons I have *hijabi* [friends who wear the *hijab*] friends and I definitely feel like when I’m with them you get like even though people don’t want to say it you could see it through their facial expressions. The like…the difference like they’ll…they’ll kind of like look at them differently than they would at me. They’ll talk to them differently than they would to me it’s different. Everything. (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

Jordan said her friend group began to change in middle school, and now that she is in high school, it is completely different. She said there is not one friend that is the same since her elementary school days. She said she only talks to Arabs, specifically Palestinians. She has a group of four close friends.

I shared with Jordan some of the documents from her school. I especially brought her attention to a flier with a list of clubs that are present at the school. I told her my observation was that the school seemed pretty fair in addressing all types of learners, such as Muslims and Arabs. For example, I told her I noticed the school has a Muslim American Association as well as a diversity club. I asked Jordan if she noticed the acceptance of diversity, and she said that she was happy that there are different types of clubs for people who share that part of their identity to join, but in reality, there is a big gap in how the clubs are treated. For example, Jordan said the schools sponsors an annual variety show, which is the equivalent to a talent show. Similarly, the diversity club puts on an annual *debka* show. The dates for both shows are set around the same time every year. However, this year, the sponsors of the variety club wanted to change the show to March. That is the month that the diversity club puts on their show. Jordan explained that the wish of the sponsors of the variety club was granted because,
They always get the upper hand. Like they’re allowed to practice at school without like supervision or like they’re just allowed to have like the stage more and we’re not. We have to find houses even though we have a bigger like, like group of people. Uh they get better lights, they get bands, we get like the…uh…you know the, just take the leftovers like you’ll get the spare time, you’ll get the less better lights, you’ll get the this and that so it’s like they’re definitely not equal when it comes to CERTAIN clubs. (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

Jordan went on to say that they were notified instead of included on the discussions to change the performance dates for the show. She was upset that they are always told instead of asked. She felt like their club was not as respected in the same way the other clubs were by administrators, teachers, and other students.

One aspect of the school culture that Jordan was appreciative about was the school dress code. She said the administrators and teachers are pretty strict with all students about following the school dress code. She said that a lot of the students get upset with the fact that they are not allowed to wear spaghetti straps and halter tops, but the school officials do a really good job of making sure everyone follows the school dress code rules. Also, the teachers and administrators don’t give the girls who wear hijab a hard time. They are accepting of them. However, she wished it was the same with the student body.

Finally, while Jordan is involved in her debka club, she tries to stay out of the drama that ensues. For example, Jordan shared there is a girl within her club that is in competition with her. Jordan referred to her as Anonymous. Anonymous tries to keep Jordan out of lead dances. Additionally, she makes Jordan feel uncomfortable when she comes in for practice because many times the practices are at Anonymous’ house. Despite the fact that Jordan feels frustrated with Anonymous’ involvement in the club, this display of emotion in regards to the interaction between the members of the club reveals Jordan’s investment in the Diversity Club. While Jordan feels silenced throughout most of her school day, the Diversity Club is one place where she feels her ethnic and religious identity are valued.
**Family.** Jordan’s mother has a high school education and works as a lunch aide in an elementary school. Her father also finished high school and is a businessman. He used to own a restaurant that served Arabic cuisine, but as Jordan said, “It didn’t really go well,” so he opened up a coffee shop near their home (Jordan, personal communication, December 18, 2017). Jordan was the youngest of four children. She grew up the youngest of three girls and one older brother. Jordan’s oldest sister, who is currently 29, finished three and a half years of college for nursing, but she got married in the interim and had two children and never managed to finish her degree. Jordan looked up to her oldest sister the most and believed that family comes first before all things. Jordan also has a brother who is 24 and is engaged to be married. He finished a bachelor’s degree in science as well as a master’s degree in Internet technology (IT). She also has another older sister who is 22 and is a student and works in the mall.

Each of Jordan’s older siblings are two years apart, while she is five years apart from her sibling that is closest to her in age. She also felt like she has to compete with the rest of her siblings. Whatever accomplishments they have completed, she felt she is expected to do the same and even exceed her siblings in their accolades. Additionally, Jordan felt that she is overlooked because she is the “baby” in the house. Similarly, Jordan’s brother also gets treated differently than his female siblings, and she believed it is not fair. Jordan said,

> My brother’s an only boy so he definitely, he definitely gets that like prince card…he gets whatever he wants even at a young age. I remember like even when I was younger he used to get away with a lot even until today. He gets whatever he wants. Definitely his way. He has a short temper too so it’s just like they kind of just go with the flow. (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

Jordan respects her older sister the most. She deems her as her role model. She said,

> I feel like I grew up in a very fast pace. I matured really easily like really fast so and she’s like that too like she’s very mature like, like she’s like that like my biggest like goal not goal like after school is like family to have my own family to have…like do my own thing and seeing hers is like a definitely something I look
Jordan loves children and she can’t wait to have some of her own one day, “inshallah” [A Muslim saying that means God willing in Arabic] (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017). When I asked Jordan how she self-identified, she shared that she identified as a Palestinian because of her love for debka. She also identified as Muslim because dean (religion) is important to her, American because she loves living in the United States and she couldn’t see herself living anywhere else.

**Sociopolitical context.** Jordan tries to stay up-to-date on politics in Falestine, but she gets frustrated and gives up because she believes the media fails to represent Arabs in a truthful way. She said,

> It’s definitely messed up like I’ll be on Twitter like I’ll see like the Jazeera or even like American news channels…it’s like the way they identify or like the way they like label things as a terrorist attack or like the like you know it’s just…there’s always that…there was like a shooting in Texas and by a White man and it was just like a oh he’s not mentally stable but come uh like a guy named Mustafa come and do that like they…they’re labeled as a terrorist or they’re a part of ISIS [whispers] something like that and they will say this without any evidence. Like it’s just yea…. (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

Jordan’s family feels the same way as her. She said they try to stay connected, but they find it easier to stay out of politics and away from the news. Jordan’s dad tries to stay informed, but every time he turns on the news channels—American or Arabic—or read a newspaper article, he gets frustrated. She said, “It burns his, like, soul inside” (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017).

Jordan stays connected to Falestine and al-Urdon (Jordan) through social media outlets such as Snapchat, Twitter, What’s App and FaceTime. She said, “Facebook is for old people” (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017). She talks to her cousins through What’s App. She said, “Oh, I have, uh, like, my cousin’s wife. I’m very close to her, so, like, we talk on
the daily through What’s App. She’ll send me pictures of her daughter and, like, how life is out there” (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017). Jordan’s mother FaceTimes her aunts and uncles every day, and she talks with them as well. Jordan is also in a group chat through Snapchat called PaliRoots. She went on to explain that PaliRoots is a company that is Palestine-based. The company sells products that are made in Palestine and support Palestine. There is a group chat related to the site where Palestinians from all over the world connect and share their day. For example, Palestinians youth living in Palestine had a live stream of the protests that happened after President Donald Trump declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel. Jordan said,

It’s like a big like a really big group chat so they post stuff from like people from Amman will post something and people from here will post something…people from Palestine and from Australia [Palestinian Australians]. They put like videos from like people who would go down to like ala [to] uh Palestine over the summer like they’d put selfies of them in the Quds and they’ll put hashtag free Jerusalem and like uhm…videos of how they spend their time out there with their family and they’re like outside in their like berendas (sun rooms in Arabic) or they’re going to the masjid (mosque in Arabic) and it’s like definitely stuff we don’t see around here so stuff like that. (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

I asked Jordan how she felt about the recent events in Palestine, and she said she was in shock. She couldn’t believe that President Donald Trump officially declared Jerusalem the capital of Palestine. She said her mom attended a protest in downtown Chicago to show solidarity with other Palestinians who did not agree with President Trump’s decision. She said she wished that she could go, but her mother told her it was more important for her to focus on school. In Jordan’s school, many of the students wore huttas, which surprised her because even non-Arab students and staff members (administrators and teachers) wore huttas and other Palestinian clothing to show support. This surprised her because,

They don’t seem like the type to be very like involved in like our like, like our diversity show we don’t have a really big like non-Arab section. It’s usually just other Arab that come. There’s some but I just didn’t expect it to be…we had like a
lot of people wearing them (*huttas*) so that surprised me…. (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

However, there was one incident at school that was not very supportive of the Palestinians that attend Jordan’s school. On the day President Trump declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel, Jordan shared that a student in the parking lot waved a confederate flag from his car as he drove around in the parking lot and no one did anything to stop it.

**Future**

In the third interview, Jordan discussed her future plans. Below illustrates Jordan’s college, career, and marriage plans. Jordan also discussed how religion impacted her life choices, such as the decision to wear the *hijab*. Finally, Jordan shared potential challenges in accomplishing her goals.

**College, career, and marriage plans.** Jordan’s goal is to become an elementary school teacher. Her plan is to attend Moraine Community College and then to continue on with her bachelor’s in elementary education. She also expressed wanting to get married and have kids because she loves kids. Jordan is excited to start her future as she is also an early graduate. She chose not to visit Amman with her mother the last couple of summers so she could take classes to finish school early. She also wakes up an extra hour early each morning to attend an additional class to make the early graduation date. If Jordan would leave a quote under her senior picture in the yearbook, she would also say that she is going to go far. She wouldn’t leave any advice for her graduating class. When I asked her why, she said that high school was just not important.

**Religion.** Jordan sees herself putting on the *hijab* in the near future. Jordan shared, “I have more say religious side than them [siblings]. I’m more into the *dean* [religion] than they are, so it’s like she thinks that I’ll put it on before them” (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017). In fact, Jordan’s mother wears the *hijab* as well as some of her aunts, but
according to Jordan, her mother chose to wear it later in life, after she was married at 22 as opposed to the age of puberty. According to Jordan, her mother waited a long time until she decided to wear the hijab. Jordan shared that she thinks often about wearing the hijab. She also mentioned that her oldest sister is 29, but she doesn’t wear it. Jordan’s parents don’t require her to wear the hijab. She said they tell her that they would like for her to, but in the end, it is her decision and she knows right from wrong and, “we’re old enough to make our own decision” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). Currently, neither Jordan nor any of her siblings wear the hijab.

When I asked Jordan if she thought she would face any issues once she puts on the hijab, she was confident that it wouldn’t be a problem. She shared that her mother, who is an elementary school aide, shared negative and positive stories about her choice to wear the hijab. Jordan said,

She’ll like wear the hijab and they’ll [people] compliment her on her outfit and like they are very…intrigued and like want to know more so I feel like people are curious so once you’re in like a place to where they’re comfortable enough, they’d want to ask you the questions that they’re scared to ask and it’s like…it’d be normal. (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

She also said she realizes that not everybody is open or understanding, but overall, her mother has positive experiences at work while wearing the hijab.

**Future challenges.** Jordan didn’t see any part of her identity getting in the way of achieving her life goals. She believed her background is what sets her apart from others. However, one challenge Jordan sees to accomplishing her academic goals is marriage. Jordan shared that her oldest sister is her role model but that her sister didn’t finish school. Jordan said that her sister got engaged at 21, married at 22, and had her first child at 23. However, she doesn’t look at marriage and children as a regret but rather a fact of life and something to look
forward to. If she can fit in her education before “life gets in the way,” that would be icing on the cake (Jordan, personal communication, January 2, 2018).

Halsey

*I’m Muslim and I’m not a terrorist. What you are saying is wrong. (personal communication, December 7, 2017)*

-Halsey

The quote above sets the stage for Halsey’s narrative. While Halsey prided herself in “staying out of drama,” she is pulled back into arguments in defense of her identity within her school context. While a boy in Halsey’s class used the words “Muslim” and “terrorist” interchangeably, Halsey spoke up, but it was to no avail because they both found themselves in the principal’s office. This is Halsey’s first year in an Illinois public high school as she just recently moved from California to Illinois. She said she moved to Illinois because her sister received a scholarship to study at the University of Illinois in Chicago and her family did not want her sister to leave the house and live by herself. Her family was also encouraged to move to Illinois because a couple of Halsey’s paternal uncles live in Illinois. In the first interview, Halsey shared that living in Illinois is an adjustment. She misses California, but she shared that she thinks she will like it in Illinois because there are more people like her, namely Palestinian Muslims, that attend her high school. Halsey said she believed that she and her siblings were the only Arabs that attended her elementary and middle school in California, and that fact alone makes Illinois much different than what she is used to. Halsey shared her life experiences beginning with her past to the present and ending with her future goals for herself. Her life story to date is illustrated below.
Past

Halsey shared what life was like growing up in her home. Below is a discussion of Halsey’s childhood memories. Halsey also shared her elementary and middle school experiences as they relate to her identity construction.

**Childhood memories.** Halsey described her home life during her childhood as normal. She said her family was like any other family. Sundays were Halsey’s favorite day of the week because that is the day her dad had off from work. She said they spent every Sunday the same way, and it was her favorite time spent with her family. She said they would go out to dinner to the Outback Steakhouse and then go home and watch a movie together and relax. Halsey shared, “We're [family] all pretty close. That's like I'm close—we're closer to each other than other people. So, they would say I'm annoying but, like, at times, we're all the people we need” (Halsey, personal communication, December 7, 2017).

One of Halsey’s favorite memories when she was young was when she would visit her grandmother’s house every Saturday. She said all of her aunts and uncles and cousins who lived in California would have dinner every Saturday at her grandmother’s house. One of Halsey’s least favorite memory from her childhood was when she found out her mother was sick. She shared that her mother got sick and then Halsey’s mother had to live in the hospital. Halsey and her siblings spent a lot of time at her grandmother’s house because her aunt lived there and her aunt helped raise them while her mother was sick in the hospital. Halsey didn’t want to talk about her mother’s illness in detail.

One aspect of Halsey’s childhood that she felt was not fair was the fact that she had to switch schools a lot. She attended one school in California, and then her parents took her out of the school because, “Like, there's a lot of bad kids there. My parents didn't want me around these type of people, so I had to move again. And I moved here so I'm at another new school” (Halsey,
personal communication, December 7, 2017). Halsey shared that it was difficult to move to so many new schools because she had to adjust to a new place. I asked her if it was difficult to make friends because of all the moves, and she said it wasn’t a problem because,

I don’t get like too close, like I just get people to talk to in school but I don’t really hang out with them outside the school. I have one friend I’m really close to in California and um that’s the only person that I would ever hang out with. (Halsey, personal communication, December 7, 2017)

**Elementary and middle school.** Halsey was the only Palestinian girl at her elementary school. Her friends were mainly White. She said growing up she felt different because she was the only Palestinian in her class. She said she felt it the most on Fridays because for Muslims, it is a day of worship, and she would go to the mosque or spend time with her family while her friends would go out and have fun.

Halsey said in elementary school, she was a goofy kid and she was always with a group of kids that were always laughing. Halsey said if you found her elementary school time capsule, she would have three items in there that summed up her childhood: a guitar pick, necklace, and a picture of her family. She said the guitar pick is special to her because she plays the guitar and music is important to her. The necklace she would put in there is one her grandfather gave to her from Amman the first time he visited her family in the United States. It is special because it reminds her of her roots. It also reminded her of her grandfather, whom she is very close with. Finally, she would put a picture of her family because she is also close with them.

Overall, Halsey tried to stay away from the drama at school; however, it became more and more difficult as she got older and entered middle school. For example, in sixth grade, Halsey got into a debate over religion with a boy at school. Halsey shared that everyone at her school talked about Arabs being terrorists whenever 9/11 was mentioned. That day when Halsey stepped into her history class, a substitute teacher was giving a lesson that paid tribute to what
happened during the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. A boy sitting next to her blurted, “All Muslims are terrorists” (Halsey, personal communication, December 7, 2017). Halsey told him, “That’s not right. Don’t say that” (Halsey, personal communication, December 7, 2017). The boy asked her why she was so upset, and she confessed, “I’m Muslim and I’m not a terrorist. What you are saying is wrong” (Halsey, personal communication, December 7, 2017). The boy didn’t believe she was Muslim. He told her she did not look like a Muslim. Halsey said they were screaming at each other back and forth until the bell rang. The substitute walked them to the principal’s office during the break between classes. That was the first time Halsey ever got called into the principal’s office. Although Halsey was angry and hurt by what the boy said, she was angrier by the principal’s response. Halsey shared the principal’s response,

Um, he was like, ‘You guys know you can’t do that in the middle of class. Like if you have problems, keep it outside of school.’ He was like, ‘It's okay if you guys have different beliefs but like you can't do that in my school.’ (Halsey, personal communication, December 7, 2017)

She wasn’t even upset at being called into the principal’s office. She said, “I was just more annoyed that he only cared about his school and not about what we were arguing about, but then I-I moved from that school so I got over it and then I never talked to that kid again” (Halsey, personal communication, December 7, 2017).

Present

Halsey self-identified as a Palestinian-American Muslim female girl. She also would identify herself as a musician. Halsey loved music and she played guitar and performed. She was in music at her high school, and she rehearsed every Monday afterschool for three hours. One of the interviewee’s favorite artists was Halsey, and that is what inspired her to choose that name as her pseudonym for this project. Halsey discussed her high school experiences in an American public school. Halsey’s family also had a large impact on her identity construction. Finally,
Halsey shared how her sociopolitical context influenced how she saw the world in relation to her identity development. Below illustrates the present experiences in Halsey’s life as they relate to her identity construction.

**High school.** Halsey shared that there are a lot more Palestinians and Arabs at her current school than at her elementary and middle schools in California. She said,

> Um, well now, the high school I go to there's a lot of kids like me and there's a lot of *hijabis*. There's a lot of like Muslim kids and I'm not used to it, but I think I like it a lot more because I'm not different anymore. Like I can fit in more. (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017).

She also noticed that there were a lot of Muslim and Arab teachers. She said most of them work with the exchange students; however, there are a couple of Muslim and Arab teachers that work with the mainstream students like herself. One of them is her brother’s history teacher. When I went on a visit to the school, I met her brother’s history teacher. She was originally Palestinian, also from the same city Halsey’s family was originally from, Beit Iksa. She also wore a *hijab*. I also learned that the exchange students Halsey is talking about are the English Language Learner population at her high school. The principal at Halsey’s high school said that there are two high schools in the district, and his school is the one that was a center school for the English Language Learner (ELL) program for the district. These were the “exchange” students Halsey was talking about. The principal shared that they have a large majority of Arabic speaking students. Therefore, he hired a parent liaison that spoke Arabic to help him stay connected to his Arabic speaking ELLs. An ELL teacher at the school that I was able to interview shared that the majority of students in the program are Palestinian, Yemeni, and Syrian refugees.

Halsey shared there is a Unity club that allows for students of all faiths to practice their religion. The club does fundraisers to raise money for events. She went on to say, “Yeah, but they have a separate club for Christians, but they don't have a club for Muslims” (Halsey,
personal communication, December 14, 2017). On my tour of the school, the principal said that there is backlash for every decision he makes in the school. However, for some decisions, there is more backlash than others, and one decision that had many parents calling was the possibility of a Muslim club. He shared that some parents just did not understand what it meant to be Muslim. They associated that word with terrorist, and it was unfortunate. However, as a compromise, the school created a Unity Club.

Halsey also shared that the school has a culture day. She said last year she knew there was a culture day at the school with students dressing up and dancing their cultural dances in the gym; however, this year, the school did not sponsor it. When I spoke with the principal, he shared with me that they had a culture day this year; however, when the Israeli flag came up, the students booed the flag. He said he had to reprimand the student population and limit what they wanted to do this year because of the lack of respect the students showed when the Israeli flag was brought out. The principal shared there are maybe two Jewish students that he knows of in the entire school; however, he said that does not mean they are Israeli. The principal said that he empathized with the students, especially because it happened around the time President Donald Trump declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel. Regardless, the principal emphasized that it was important that the students respect all cultures.

Halsey was friendly with two students at her new school. However, she doesn’t socialize with anyone outside of school or school events. She was only close with one friend from California, who was Mexican. She said she was close with her because she was open-minded and always asked questions about things she did not know, and she felt it was an even exchange of understanding each other’s religion and culture. She shared that her family was like her friends because they were really close so she didn’t really need anybody else.
Overall, Halsey said she is still adjusting to her new school. She shared,

> When I first moved here. Like the first two months, like I didn't talk to anyone like at all. Like I was more annoyed 'cause like I wasn't comfort-- I'm still not like 100% comfortable here and I don't think I'll ever be 100% comfortable. So I was just more annoyed and I would stay at my room and I didn't wanna [sic] talk to anyone. (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017)

Halsey missed her life in California but she hopes with time that things get better for her and she learns to adjust to her life here.

Similarly, Halsey also does not get close with her teachers. Even though Halsey’s teachers knew that she was a dedicated student, at times, she failed to pay attention. Halsey said it was hard for her to stay engaged in her school context, and one way she coped with school was by listening to music. For example, “If I'm having a bad day, I don't pay attention. I'll, like, put my headphones in even when you're not supposed to. That's why they [the teachers] say, I don't listen sometimes, but most of the time I do-do what they want and what I have to do” (Halsey, personal communication, December 7, 2017). Halsey knew education was important, so she said she does what she has to do to keep her grades up and get out or graduate.

**Family.** Halsey was the youngest of her siblings. She had one older sister who was 18 and one older brother who was currently 16. Her father used to work for the airport in California, but now he had a job through Amazon delivering packages. Her father came to the United States as a teenager and attended a university in Arizona where he received his bachelor’s degree. Halsey’s father received his degree in engineering. Shortly after college, Halsey’s father moved to California where he met Halsey’s mother and they were engaged to be married. Halsey’s father has quite a few cousins who lived in Illinois, and almost all of his brothers and sisters as well as his parents still live in Amman. He was one of the only members of his family to immigrate to the United States for better opportunities. He was one of 12 children, seven sisters and five boys.
Halsey’s mother was a baker and had an online catering business. She immigrated to the United States when she was eleven years old. Her family initially settled in New York and then they moved to California. Halsey shared that her grandfather became ill, so her mother had to drop out of school and take care of him because she was the oldest of four siblings. She stayed home and helped her mother with cooking, cleaning, babysitting, and looking after her father. As a result, Halsey’s mother was never able to complete an education past middle school. Halsey’s mother got married young and is the only sibling out of five (two boys and three girls) who didn’t have the opportunity to finish high school. Only one of her siblings made it to college. Even though Halsey’s mother has an older brother, because she is the next oldest female, she was chosen to stay home and help her mother in the house.

Halsey’s mother is originally from Palestine from the city of Beit Iksa, and her father is originally Jordanian from the city of Amman; however, Halsey identifies as Palestinian. She said her father encouraged them to be proud Palestinians because he understood and empathized with the Palestinian people, and he wanted his children to always remember their Palestinian roots. Halsey’s mother had a house in Beit Iksa and she visited there often. Halsey had never visited Palestine or Jordan and she wished someday she could visit. She said her uncle and her older sister were planning a trip to visit there this summer, and she wished she can go with them but she is taking summer classes so she can graduate high school early.

Currently, Halsey’s family all live together in an apartment next to her high school. Her father just recently arrived from California because he had to stay behind to work. Halsey’s father is always busy working and studying. In between delivering packages for Amazon, he is also working on a certificate related to his work, so he is very busy and she does not get to see him much.
Halsey spent her days by herself after school. Her sister stayed late at her university library studying, her mother and father work, and her brother stayed in his room most of the time. She said she never really got along with him; however, she believed it has gotten worse because she thinks he was also having a hard time adjusting to life in Illinois. She also shared that her brother was closer to her older sister but she is busy now in college and doesn’t spend much time with him. Regardless, Halsey reassured me that, “We like each other at the end of the day” (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017).

Halsey also shared that she and her sister are responsible for most of the chores in the house. However, this year her parents “cut her older sister some slack” because she is in college (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017). Yet, they always let her brother get away with doing close to nothing. She said she thought it was because he was a boy. She shared that he has always had more freedom than she and her sister did. For example, “me and my sister have more responsibilities. Well, they were like that, like, in California. It was like if he wanted to go to a football game, like, on Friday night, he could go, but if me and my sister wanted to go, ‘Your brother has to go with you. You can't go’” (Halsey, December 14, 2017). She said her parents said they trusted them but they didn’t trust everyone around them, so they wanted them to go with their brother so he could protect them from harm. She also said he was allowed to stay out late while she and her sister had a curfew. For example, he could stay at his friend’s house until one in the morning while the latest she and her sister could be out was 8pm.

Halsey said her role models are her mother and her sister. She said she respects her mother because she went through a lot in her childhood but she still managed to get married and have a family. She also admired her sister and wants to follow in her footsteps. Her sister is
doing all the things she hopes to do one day: wear the *hijab* and attend college to become a pediatrician. She said currently, her sister is majoring in neuroscience.

Halsey’s first artifact that she shared with me as something that represented her identity was a metal bracelet with Palestinian flags all around it. Figure 4-8 is a picture of Halsey’s first artifact. Halsey shared that her maternal aunt brought this back for her after visiting Palestine. She said that she has never visited and she really wants to. This artifact is the only thing she has from home. She said if she had to assign it a hashtag, she would call it #home because she considers Palestine to be her true home.

![Figure 4-8](image)

Figure 4-8. This figure is a picture of Halsey’s artifact. It is a bracelet with Palestinian flags. Halsey said if she had to assign her artifact a hashtag she would name it #home because Palestine is her home. This is the only item she has from Palestine. Halsey’s aunt brought it back from Palestine as a gift for Halsey.

The second artifact Halsey shared with me was a necklace she received from her best friend in California. She said her friend was visiting Mexico for vacation and brought this back for her as a birthday gift. She said she wears it all the time and it is important to her because it reminds her of the good times she had with that friend in California. If Halsey were to assign this artifact a hashtag, she would call it #happiness because, “Maybe, like, my happiness because, like, when I was with her, I was always smiling and I was always happy” (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017).
Figure 4-9. This figure is a picture of Halsey’s second artifact. This artifact is important to her because it was a birthday gift from her friend. She bought it for Halsey when she went on vacation to Mexico. The artifact reminds her of her friendship and she would assign it a hashtag of #happiness.

The last artifact Halsey shared was a picture of herself with her sister, her father, and paternal grandfather when he came to visit during Thanksgiving break 2017. Halsey said her family means a lot to her and she is very close with them, especially her paternal grandfather. If Halsey had to assign her picture a hashtag, it would be #family. Halsey asked me not to publish the picture because her sister is not wearing her hijab in the picture so she wanted to respect her privacy. The most important artifact to Halsey is the picture of her family because, “I care about them a lot” (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017).

Sociopolitical context. Halsey is upset at the media today. She believed that the media is not being honest when it comes to representing Arabs and Muslims. She said, “I think that they cover up everything that's going on back home. They cover up everything bad and like kind of twist it around and we don't get the full information. Like, they're lying to everyone” (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017). When I asked her to give me an example she shared,

They don't really show like everything that goes on back home like they don't show like the little kids that are dying every day. They don't show like moms holding their dead babies in their arms like they don't show the little things and that-that frustrates me a lot. (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017)
Halsey shared that her family felt the same way she did about the news and how Arabs and Muslims are portrayed, but they choose not to talk about it because it is frustrating. Halsey said her father watches the news every morning before work to stay up-to-date with headlines, but her family’s involvement with politics and media doesn’t extend beyond that. Halsey said, “Um, I mean, none of us [her family], like, really talk about it a lot, but when we do, it's just like we know it's a bunch of…It’s bogus, and we know that things that are going on, like, they need to be shown more like what's happening because no one knows what's happening” (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017). Halsey stays connected to Palestine through Skype. She said she Skypes with family members back home a couple times a week. She mainly Skypes with her paternal grandparents, who live in Amman, Jordan. She shared that her father uses Viber to stay connected to his family in Amman daily.

When President Donald Trump declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel, Halsey said everyone at school was wearing the Palestinian flag and one boy painted his face the colors of the Palestinian flag to show support. Halsey said she had mixed feelings about everyone showing support for Palestine because she wished that others would show support more often and not only when something bad happens. Halsey also shared that she felt Jerusalem wasn’t America’s to give. She and her entire family were somber after they heard the news. She heard there was a protest downtown, and she wanted to go but she felt it wasn’t a good idea because the last protest she attended in California got out of hand. Halsey shared, “Like, it was so bad. Like, there was a bunch of fights, and, like, the police were like holding us back. But, like, the Israelis- the Israelis they [the police] weren't holding them back. It was just us. It wasn’t fair” (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017).
While Halsey felt that the school culture is accepting of other cultures, she also felt like no one cared. For example, she said that the Palestinians who wore the flag and the boy who painted his face the colors of the Palestinian flag didn’t face resistance from teachers or administrators; however, no one acknowledged what was happening either. When I asked Halsey how that made her feel, she said, “It’s annoying. Yeah, I mean, like, I thought it was a big problem, and it made me mad because no one brought it up” (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017). If Halsey was given the opportunity to impart words of wisdom to her fellow classmates in her high school graduating class, she said that she would tell them that, “I feel like nothing happening right now really matters. Like, things are happening now isn't gonna affect you in five years” (Halsey, personal communication, December 21, 2017). Halsey’s parents believe in her future.

Future

Halsey discussed her future plans. Halsey’s college, career, and marriage plans are detailed below. Halsey also discussed how religion impacted her life choices, such as the decision to wear the hijab. Finally, Jordan shared potential challenges in accomplishing her goals.

College, career, and marriage plans. Halsey wants to become a pediatrician when she grows up. She said she loves kids and she wants to save people’s lives. She referenced “Gray’s Anatomy” and the rush she feels when she sees the television doctors save the lives of their patients every day, and she wants to be a part of that. During the course of the second interview, Halsey shared with me her favorite subject was science, specifically biology, and her least favorite subject was math. She learned that doctors need to take a lot of math classes in order to graduate, and she was bummed about that. She said she hopes her struggle with math doesn’t deter her from becoming a doctor. Halsey’s parents would be proud in whatever she chooses to
Religion. Halsey sees herself wearing the *hijab* in her future. She said she thinks about it often, especially since her sister has put it on. She said she gets a lot of questions about why she doesn’t put on the *hijab* since she is Muslim. She said it is hard because people who know her and know her sister are confused as to why her sister wears the *hijab* and she doesn’t. Halsey is hesitant to do so because, “I think of everything that comes with it, and I'm not ready for it yet” (Halsey, personal communication, December 21, 2017). Halsey said her parents are proud of her sister because she made a commitment to wear the *hijab*, but at the same time, they do not pressure her to wear it. Her mother does not wear the *hijab*, but most of Halsey’s aunts do. Her mother wants to get the courage one day to put on the *hijab*, but she still has not decided to wear it.

Future challenges. One of the challenges Halsey thinks she will face in accomplishing her academic goals is school. She said that school is difficult for her. She has a difficult time staying engaged and she does not feel connected to her school context. Halsey also worried about the time when she decides to put on the *hijab*. She worried that her choice to wear the *hijab* will negatively impact her chances in life of becoming a pediatrician.

**Hope**

*What they tell you is to put, ‘White,’ but like, how am I going to put, ‘White’ if I'm not getting those, like, standards in society if I'm, like, a Palestinian. So, I would just put, ‘other’ but I see that being unfair.* (personal communication, December 23, 2017)

-Hope

The quote above is in reference to Hope’s frustration with college admission applications. She shared that there is no box to check Middle Eastern. She said that society wants her to check
the box for White, but she is not treated as ‘White’ in American society. Hope was a 16-year-old girl that I met through a contact I met at an event sponsored by Arab American Family Services (AAFS). Hope shared her life experiences beginning with her past to the present and ending with her future goals for herself. Her life story to date is illustrated below.

**Past**

Hope shared what life was like growing up in her home. Below is a discussion of Hope’s childhood memories. Hope also shared her elementary and middle school experiences as it relates to her identity construction.

**Visits to Palestine.** One of Hope’s least favorite memories as a child was when she was visiting Palestine with her family. She said she was 12 years old and she had just landed with her family at the Ben Gurion Airport after a 12-hour flight and a connection in Europe. She said the Israeli soldiers at the airport detained her family for four hours. Hope shared, “They made us open each luggage piece and they checked it. And I was so little so I didn't get it. But, like, the guys with the guns just kept like hitting into me. So I remember my mom, like, yelling at them and being like, ‘Don't touch her!’ So, that was scary” (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017).

Hope shared how Beit Iksa was different than any of the other place in Palestine. She said it is one of the farthest villages to get to in Palestine and it was closest to the border with Israel. She shared that it took about an hour from the airport to get to her village of Beit Iksa. She described,

Like, I noticed it. Because when you're going in, you kinda feel, like, you're in Jordan. And like, I'm having-- you know what I mean, like, the shopping malls and it's kinda a little more modern. And then you go into, like, my village, and it's like, you don't see any girls out. Like, all the girls are inside and all the guys are just working at the little shops…picking up the goats around, like, you know….It's cute but it's so old-fashioned. (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017)
Every time Hope’s family visited Palestine, they always try to spend at least a week in an apartment in the city of Ramallah. She said that her mother wanted Hope and her sisters to be able to go out and have fun. Hope shared,

So that was fun but staying at Ramallah you notice the difference like it’s (Ramallah) metropolitan. Like then you go back there (Beit Iksa), and it’s like you only see like the old ladies like carrying fruit on their head, like no girls my age out. Just like their heads are down and like, like tight, tight scarves and stuff. (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017)

Hope shared that she visited Palestine every three years with her family. Based on Hope’s visits to Palestine, she could never see herself living there. She said,

Maybe for a summer but I can't see, like, I would stay there and I would, like I don't- I can't ever work there. You know what I mean? Like, you can't have a life there. I’d never-- I’d never raise a family in Palestine and be able to take care of it. Like maybe, in summer, I will stay there for a trip or something but not to develop a life, you know. (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017)

Hope even shared that on her last visit, she got to experience her cousin’s wedding. She said everyone in the village was involved, but she said she would like her wedding to be in the United States because her family is all here and there are a lot of rules that the bride had to follow while getting married in Beit Iksa that she did not agree with. For example, the bride’s hair was showing when she walked outside to the limousine. The bride’s family was upset by that but Hope didn’t think it was a problem because it was her wedding day. Hope said that she would also have her wedding be separated between males and females. Hope also shared that it is the expectation of her parents to have a separate wedding for all their daughters; however, Hope’s oldest sibling debates with her parents over this point because she would like a mixed wedding. She said she wants her father and her cousins who are like her brothers to see her in her wedding dress. While Hope’s father is flexible on this point, her mother is not.

**Elementary and middle school.** As a child, Hope attended an Islamic all-girl school in Bridgeview, Illinois. She spent kindergarten through fourth grade in the Islamic school. She said
her experience there was really fun because she took religion, Arabic, and English classes. Hope shared that she loved her elementary school years because she was able to feel her culture and religion. She said they took off for Eid and had special parties at school to celebrate the holiday.

Additionally, Hope was most excited about the fact that she could speak Arabic and talk about topics that she didn’t have to explain because everyone just knew what she meant, “It wasn't awkward to talk about certain things or, like, expressing things because everyone was Muslim” (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017). Finally, Hope said the community just outside of her elementary school was majority Arab. She said you could see shops with store signs in Arabic. The people who live around the school are mostly Arabs. She was even excited to share that on Google Maps, the city is called Little Palestine due to the majority Palestinians who live in the area.

Hope’s elementary school friends were the same ones that she has today. They are all from the Islamic all-girl. When I visited the school, the dean shared the same sentiment. She said the girls that attend her school make friends for life. The dean shared that some of the girls that left and graduated, came back and were teachers in the school and were still friends until this day. Even some who married and moved away still kept in touch with each other.

Hope said that if someone found her elementary school time capsule, they would find a Nintendo DS, jump rope, and a necklace. She said she loved to play video games as a child so that is why she would have a Nintendo DS in her capsule. She said the jump rope reminds her of her elementary school and friends because they didn’t have a playground when she first began attending her school and they would have so much fun playing Double Dutch together. Finally, she would have a necklace in there that she used to wear all the time. She said she got it from her
grandmother. It was the only gift she had from Palestine as a child. It was special to her because it reminded her of her grandmother and of Palestine.

For middle school, Hope begged her mother to send her to the local public middle school. She said she wanted to know what it was like outside of her private school experience.

Hope said her experience in a public middle school was,

really different. I live in a really, all White community so when I would go to school and stuff I would like say something in Arabic and slip up and they (the other students) would just look at me weird. But I even noticed like they would dis Palestine, like they’d say it’s not a country and I don't think they meant it intentionally. It’s just like how they grew up and like how they would talk. (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017)

Moreover, Hope shared that the students in her middle school would constantly ask her questions. For example, every year, the school held an annual bonfire and Hope was not allowed to go. At the end of the year, she also was invited to graduation parties but she was also forbidden from attending. It was her parents’ rule. She tried to tell the students that her parents didn’t want her going because it was against her culture and religion because the party was mixed. Moreover, Hope shared,

If I was ever going to anybody's house that was, um, like Muslim like they (Hope’s parents) just like, what is he, do they have an older brother? Like, you know what I mean asking those questions and stuff. So, I like I wasn't allowed to sleepover at anybody's house, but girls were allowed to sleep over my house. (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017)

Hope’s parents did not feel comfortable with Hope sleeping over anybody’s house, especially if there were young men in the home. The students would question why her parents were so strict. Hope’s middle school peers encouraged her to go without the consent of her parents and Hope said she couldn’t do that. Hope said, “Anything like me try to explain something to them they're just really arrogant. So they’d be like ‘That's stupid,’ or ‘That's dumb’ or like ‘That's weird.’ Like, you know what I mean?” (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017). Hope
confessed that sometimes, she wanted to attend the parties she was invited to but she knew she couldn’t so she tried to avoid her peers as much as possible. She also shared that she felt she didn’t fit in because the community was majority White and all knew each other and she was always the odd one out.

Hope said she cried so much her first day in middle school. She would come home and say to herself how much she hated the school. She hated the fact that she didn’t know anybody and that it felt awkward. She then started to make friends and things became better, but it was still different for her because she saw that the girls in her middle school were not cultured. She said, “They [her middle school friends] weren't mean or anything. It's just that they weren't cultured like the same way that I was, so there're certain things that they just didn't understand so I hated it” (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017). However, in retrospect, Hope believed,

Now looking back on it I'm like it was fine like it taught me things like how to be confident and stuff like I'm not even nervous if I have to go to some place in my community. It taught me who I was like cause so like you don't know who you are because you don't have any individuality if you just fit into that certain school. She said that it taught me like to just be your own person. (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017)

During the time Hope attended public school, her mother was frustrated by the lack of Arab representation on the school campus. Hope said her mother told her, “Bring Mariam and don’t bring me Nicole” (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017). Hope’s mother was referring to the names of girls that attended her school. Hope’s mother wanted Hope to come home with other girls like her who were Palestinian Muslims whom Hope could interact with other than American girls with American names like Nicole.

Also, during the time Hope spent in the public middle school, she said she remembered little things that reminded her of how different she was from others. For example, she
remembered her mother packing her an Arabic dish for lunch. She said she sat in the cafeteria during lunchtime and took out her food to eat and remembered the American girls around her being disgusted by the food she took out. Hope said she felt embarrassed, ashamed, and angry all at once because she wanted to fit in, but at the same time, her mother took a lot of time to make that dish and to prepare her lunch just for the girls around her to make fun of the cultural dish she had for lunch.

In the end, Hope said she wouldn’t change her middle school experience. Her mother always regretted sending Hope there because she saw how much she struggled during those years; however, Hope shared that her experience prepared her for college because she has learned not to be sensitive or take offense easily to people who are ignorant about her cultural background and religious beliefs. For example, she is in the Model United Nations (UN) club, and she saw students in high school from all over the United States when she went to competitions. Hope got annoyed at how people stared at her friends who wear the hijab or ask ignorant questions about her religion and culture. She said she heard a lot of ignorant remarks from other students that were directed towards her and her friends, and she knew how to deal with it, but her friends got nervous and offended. She attributed her mental strength to the year she spent in a public middle school.

Present

Hope discussed her high school experience in an all-Islamic girl school. Hope’s family also had a large impact on her identity construction. Finally, Hope shared how her sociopolitical context influenced how she saw the world in relation to her identity development. Below illustrates the present experiences in Hope’s life as it relates to her identity construction.

High school. Hope attended a private Islamic all-girl high school. It was the same school she attended during her elementary school days. The majority of the students were Palestinian,
but the student body is made up of cultures from all over the world, such as Pakistan, Lebanon, Syria, and Somalia to name a few. The majority of the teachers at Hope’s high school are Palestinian as well, but the entire school is Muslim so that is how they are all the same.

The majority of Hope’s friends are Palestinian and she loves them dearly. She said it is easy to be with them because “they help you to stay safe in tense situations” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). For example, Hope remembers during the time of the presidential election and a lot of news reporters and some Trump supporters kept trying to come onto the school grounds to ask the principal what she thought about President Trump becoming president. She said one of them even came in a hostile way and kept asking leading questions, so the dean advocated to get security on the premises for a couple of weeks until the reporters and supporters stopped coming onto school grounds.

Hope’s favorite subject in school is science, especially biology. She loves it because of the labs and experiments she gets to complete. Science is also a favorable subject because she gets to learn about the new discoveries scientists make every day. She also likes math because she said it’s the easiest and the subject she understands the most. She shared that all one has to do is understand the formulas and just plug in the numbers, and “Voila, you get the answer” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). She also likes science and math because she knows it is important to her future career as a medical doctor. Hope said she hates history because it depresses her. She said that it is the same sad story over and over again where someone invades someone else’s country. She said right now, she is learning about Native American history, and it frustrates her because she feels the same thing is happening in Palestine at the moment and she felt there was nothing she can do about it. She said that the same thing keeps happening over and over and no one has learned their lesson.
If Hope were given the opportunity to impart words of wisdom on her graduating class, she would say “It’s not that serious” (Hope, personal communication, December 23, 2017). She encouraged other high school students to evaluate and re-evaluate the choices they make in life and ask themselves whether or not their choices will benefit their future. She said, “Like, this generation has, like, the highest anxiety rate for high school kids and, like, suicidal rate, and I'm like, ‘That's crazy’” (Hope, personal communication, December 23, 2017).

**Family.** Hope is the middle child of three. She has a sister who is older than her and is a first year college student. Her sister attends the University of Illinois (U of I), she is 18 years old, and she lives away from home. Hope also has a younger sister who is 14 and a freshman in the same high school Hope attends. Hope’s oldest sister is studying business and has aspirations to go to law school. This year, Hope is a junior in high school.

Hope’s parents are both certified public accountants (CPAs). Both Hope’s parents came to the United States for an education. While they are both originally Palestinian from the village of Beit Iksa, Hope’s mother grew up in Saudi Arabia. Hope’s mother was not allowed to go to college in Saudi Arabia; however, she applied and received a scholarship to study in the states at the University of Chicago in Illinois. Hope’s father grew up in Beit Iksa, Palestine. He felt there were not many opportunities for him back home, so he came to the United States to study.

Hope’s father was bored with his accounting position, so he returned to school to obtain a law degree. Hope said her mother was the head of the household while her father went back to school to obtain another professional degree. Hope’s mother wanted her husband to be happy in his profession, so she made the sacrifice to take care of the family. Hope shared that her father always challenged her and her siblings to think outside of the box. She also shared that every dinner conversation turned political because her dad was a lawyer. Regardless, he also sheltered
Hope. He did not allow for Hope and her sisters to watch violent movies. Also, they stopped visiting Palestine as often because her parents are worried about the growing tension in the territories. For example, Hope shared that one summer when she and her family visited Beit Iksa for her cousin’s wedding, she heard gunshots in the middle of the night. The next morning, Hope found out that there was a scuffle between Palestinians and Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers on the border between Beit Iksa and Jerusalem. After that visit, Hope has not returned to Palestine since.

Hope shared that people kept encouraging her mother to have another baby now that her girls are grown. They want to see her have a boy. As a joke, close family call Hope’s father Abu (father) Eliza, which means father of Eliza (the name of their oldest daughter). Typically in Arab culture, once you have a son, you are called father of and then your oldest son’s name. Hope shared that her mother is happy with her three daughters and doesn’t need a son.

Hope respects her mother the most. She said she admires her because she is a respectful woman who stands her ground. For example, she is the oldest of five siblings, and she didn’t want to follow traditional gender roles, so she applied to universities in the United States so that she could receive an education as she was not allowed to go to school in Saudi Arabia. When she got accepted into UIC, she asked her father if she could go, and although he wasn’t happy about it, he didn’t stand in her way. Eventually, her entire family left Saudi Arabia and moved to the United States to be closer to her. Hope’s mother tells her that it is important to make her own decisions in life; however, it is also important to be respectful in order to get what you want. Hope’s mother tells her that she was respectful and asked her father if she could come to the States to study, and while he was nervous to send her on her own, he allowed her to go because he didn’t want to be the reason why she didn’t get her education, especially since she was so
smart and had the highest score on her college entrance exam from her graduating class. Hope also admired the fact that her mother went back to school while she had two kids to achieve her CPA. Hope sees herself being like her mother: a working mother.

**Sociopolitical context.** After President Donald Trump declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel, there were many protests in Palestine. Hope wanted to be a part of the protests but her mother told her, “Your job is here. Get your education. And then when you become a doctor get there, help them” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). Hope went on to describe what happened in school after President Trump’s announcement. She said the night before, the phones of everybody she knew were “blowing up” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). Everyone went to Snapchat to discuss the situation. She said people were posting comments like, “We knew this was going to happen because it was depicted in the Quran about the Day of Judgment,” and others were encouraging people to “come to the protest tomorrow downtown” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). Hope wanted to attend the protest, but her mother told her that her place was to be in school. Other girls received permission from their parents to leave school early to attend the protests. The school allowed it as an excused absence and even encouraged the girls to go and represent Palestine. Everyone at school that day was wearing the *hutta*—teachers, administrators, students, and parents. It was like a sea of black and white at school. People at the mixed Islamic school across the street was also wearing the *hutta*. Hope said that she talked about President Trump’s decision in every one of her classes. The students couldn’t focus on their studies because they were angry and sad. Finally, Hope’s principal announced,

> It’s okay to talk about it (President Trump’s announcement) because the majority of you guys are Palestinian, and you guys are Arab and Muslim, you guys understand each other, but be wary because you need to be mindful of how you guys talk…you guys are angry, that’s fine, but you can’t act angry when you’re
outside, and you’re not in a safe zone. (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017)

Hope said she understood that the principal was just trying to get everyone to “dial it down” because others outside of their school environment might see their angry as extremist. She said the principal wanted them to get it all out but to be calm when talking about it with others so they don’t fall into the stereotype the outside world has for Arabs and Muslims.

Hope shared that every week, she walks across the street to the masjid or mosque to do Friday prayer. The week President Trump made his announcement, even the Sheikh during Friday prayer addressed the situation. Hope shared that the sheikh’s message was, “you can be sad but you can’t be angry” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). Also, the mixed Islamic school across the street held a fundraiser to raise money for the people in Palestine.

One artifact that is dear to Hope is a bracelet that her mother bought for her when they traveled to Palestine together as a family (see Figure 4-10 below). Hope said, “This was special to bring because it represents Palestine for me” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). Hope said she specifically chose this bracelet because her mother bought the bracelet from Jerusalem and it represents Palestine; however, President Trump recognizes Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel. She said she also loves this artifact because of its intricacy. She said that the basic colors of Palestinian tutreez (embroidery) is black and red, but every village has their own colors and design that represents their hometown. It’s also true of all the different Middle Eastern countries, that they all have their own style and design of embroidery. If she had to assign it a hashtag, she would assign it #freePalestine.
Figure 4-10. This artifact is a bracelet that Hope’s mother bought for her from Jerusalem, Palestine when they visited as a family one summer. The design is traditional Palestinian *tutreez* (embroidery). The bracelet is special to her because it represents home. If she had to assign it a hashtag it would be #freePalestine.

Hope’s parents encouraged her and her sisters to focus on their studies. Hope’s mother tries to stay out of politics because she is sensitive and it hurts her to see what is going on in the media; however, she still stays informed with the headlines. Her mother told Hope that it’s good that she wants to make a difference, but nothing will work without prayer. Her mother believes that action without prayer and prayer without action will not work. You need both to make a difference. Her maternal grandmother tells her the same thing. The only change that will happen is the change Allah wills to happen.

Hope’s father told her that President Trump is a political leader and if she didn’t like the changes he is making, she should “get involved in the politics” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). Hope expressed that everyone at school and in the community was upset because a girl posted on Snapchat a “dis” about Muslims and Palestinians. She posted, “I just like went to school today and saw a lot of Muslim flags and I've never been more disgusted in my life!” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). Someone reposted her comment on Twitter and everyone had something to say. Hope said all the Muslims and Palestinians
“reamed” her. Hope said she was “pissed off” by it because it wasn’t even a Muslim flag; it was the Palestinian flag. Hope’s father told her not to engage like the others on social media. He said social media is not a way to solve problems. He shared, “If you want to raise awareness [on social media], sure, that is fine, but…now that girl is never gonna like Muslims. She is never gonna like Palestinians because all the Muslim Palestinians are bashing her…cyber bullying her” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). Her father told her that she shouldn’t use ignorant comments to defend yourself, just bring awareness to the situation because “you don't have rights when you are Palestinian” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017).

Hope has cousins who live in Palestine, and there is one that she stays connected with via Snapchat. She said her cousin posts pictures of his kids. Hope’s cousin also shared stories about life in Palestine. For example, after President Trump made his declaration, Hope’s cousin said it got really dangerous. There were a bunch of protests that got violent. He said that his children usually walk to school, but this time, the school asked that the parents accompany the children to school and pick them up at the end of the day. The students were not allowed to play outside during recess. Regardless, Hope said that her cousin told her people got into serious fights with IDF soldiers and the outcome was deadly. He also shared that he has seen so many of his friends and people get shot that he doesn’t want that for his children, so he tries to stay out of the politics and he minds his own business as much as he can.

Hope also stays connected to Palestine through Snapchat groups such as Palestine's night home. Hope said, “It's a Snapchat story that this guy created, and he gives the account to a different, like, person every week in Palestine. So there is somebody blogging in Palestine” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). She is also part of a Snapchat group called America’s Palestinians, and Palestinians all over the United States post pictures and
comments about their daily lives as Palestinians living in the U.S.A. Sometimes, Hope goes on Twitter to stay connected with what people are saying about different topics; however, she doesn’t like Twitter because she believed “it’s just a bunch of randoms sharing their opinion and it’s not backed up” by any evidence so she tried to stay away from it (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017).

Hope is frustrated with the way Muslims are depicted in the American news today. She said that there are a lot of stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims in the media that fail to accurately represent these populations. For example, she said that in the news the journalists use Muslim and Arab interchangeably, and this is not correct. For example, not all Muslims are Arab and not all Arabs are Muslims. She is also frustrated with the fact that whenever a Muslim or Arab person is suspected of committing a crime, the word terrorist is used to depict them. However, if a White person commits a similar crime, the journalists fail to pin it on his race rather. They say it was an individual act and he was mentally ill. Additionally, the White person goes to a mental health facility, whereas the Arab or Muslim gets sentenced to prison.

Hope also shared that she did a project for her school about crimes in the United States, and she said another stereotype is that immigrants, such as Arabs, commit most of the crimes, but in fact, more crimes are committed by White Caucasians. Moreover, Hope said her parents are into politics; however, her father is “really fed up with it” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). He watches multiple news channels, both American and Arabic, to stay up-to-date with headlines; however, Hope shared that her father also gets frustrated when he sees how Arab Muslims are portrayed in today’s media. Hope said her father likes to get involved more than just staying up-to-date on news headlines. For example, he attends conferences such as AMP (American Muslims for Palestine) and hangs out in the lobby to “get interviewed” so
that he can contribute to true accounts about what is happening in Palestine. He also attends protests and he encourages Hope and her sisters to attend to stay involved and contribute to truthful and positive portrayals of Arab Muslims.

**Future**

Hope discussed her future plans. Below illustrates Hope’s college, career, and marriage plans. She also discussed how religion impacted her life choices such as the decision to wear the hijab. Finally, Hope shared potential challenges in accomplishing her goals.

**College, career, and marriage plans.** When Hope grows up, she wants to attend the University of Michigan to become a pediatrician. At 26, Hope wants to graduate medical school and be engaged to be married. She wants to live somewhere close to her family once she gets married. Hope also wants to work for Doctors without Borders and be sent to Palestine to help other Palestinians like her.

**Religion.** Hope’s Muslim identity is the most salient to her identity construction. Three of the artifacts she chose to represent her identity were about her religion. The first one was a souvenir of al-Ka’bah (see Figure 4-11). She bought it when she went with her family to do Umrah (an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca). She said it was important to her because it represents her religion and the important role Allah plays in her life as completing a pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the pillars of Islam. Hope shared that she completed Umrah in 2009 when she was just nine years old; however, she still remembers the experience to this day. She also shared that for her senior school trip, her graduating class gets to complete Umrah and she is excited to visit Mecca as an older child because she knows so much more about al-Ka’bah’s importance. If Hope had to assign it a hashtag, it would be #forAllah.
Figure 4-11. This artifact is a glass statute of *Al-Ka’bah* Hope bought from Mecca while completing *Umrah*. She said it represents the importance religion plays in her life. If she had to assign it a hashtag it would be #forAllah.

Another artifact Hope shared with me was a canvas of Haiti (see Figure 4-12). She said her family loved to travel, and they went on a cruise to Haiti, Jamaica, and Mexico. She said she loved Haiti the best. Hope bought this canvas when the boat docked at Port-au-Prince. While in Haiti, Hope remembered that a little girl who was a little younger than Hope kept selling her mother chocolate, and her mother kept buying it from her. Hope asked her mother why she bought the whole box of chocolate, and her mother told her that the money the kids make on these purchases is their livelihood. She encouraged Hope to remember the blessings *Allah* gives her and to share what she has with others. Hope said that wherever they travel, her parents try to make sure that she and her sisters understand the backstory of the people who make their travel experience enjoyable. For example, on the cruise ship, the employees do not always receive the right treatment or a fair salary. Therefore, if Hope had to assign this canvas a hashtag, it would say #beaware.
Figure 4-12. This artifact is a canvas of Haiti. Hope bought this on a cruise she took with her family to Haiti, Jamaica, and Mexico. She purchased the canvas in Port-au-Prince. If Hope had to assign it a hashtag it would say #beaware.

The final artifact was a picture of prayer beads (see Figure 4-13 below). Hope’s friend completed Umrah and brought her back a misbaha (prayer beads) as a gift. Hope said this was important to her because it reminds her of the love she has for her friends. If Hope had to assign this artifact a hashtag, it would be #sisters.

Figure 4-13. This artifact is a picture of prayer beads. Hope’s friend went on Umrah and brought it back for her as a gift. If Hope had to assign it a hashtag it would be #sisters.

Another aspect of religion that Hope reflected on was the social dynamics between men and women in Islam. Hope said that everything changes when guys enter the picture. For example, her female cousin recently got married and she felt that she could not do all the things they used to do together. For example, when they travel together, they will have their separate
room, whereas when she was single, all the girls would room together and have a sleepover and stay up. Also, Hope’s cousins wear hijab. Every time a male enters a room, they scramble to put on their hijab and everyone “acts different” (Hope, personal communication, December 23, 2017).

Hope also remembered a childhood memory about gender differences that resonated with her to this day. She said the first and only serious fight she had with her uncle was about gender expectations. For example, Hope’s uncle and his son were visiting her family’s house. Hope’s male cousin picked up a vacuum and began to play with it. Hope’s uncle made a joke and told his son to drop the vacuum because that was a woman’s job. Hope and her older sister were offended by the comment. Hope said her uncle told them to “stop acting American.” Hope’s uncle reassured everyone that he did not believe entirely in traditional gender roles, but he also emphasized that while it is important for girls to get an education and work outside of the home, girls shouldn’t deny the fact that they also need to help take care of their homes. Hope admitted that she loved her uncle and she agreed that he is forward thinking; however, his joke hurt her because she was aware of the stereotype against as caretakers in the home.

Hope shared that her parents would like for her and her sisters to wear the hijab in the future. Hope’s mother told her that she has to decide when she is ready. Hope received mixed messages from her mother about the choice to wear the hijab. While Hope’s mother encouraged Hope to make the decision to wear it, she also encouraged her to blend in as much as possible so that other non-Muslim Americans will be accepting of her. Hope’s mother shared, “We have to adapt” and "You can't scare the people away when you are in America,” referring to the hijab and her dress in general (Hope, personal communication, December 23, 2017). Additionally, most of Hope’s cousins as well as her mother wore the hijab. She has been wearing it since she
was 12 years old. Hope said her mother wore the *hijab* at a young age because she grew up in Saudi Arabia and it was required there. Her mother also wore the *niqab* (a veil worn over the face with the exception of the eyes) and the *jilbab* (a long dress with long sleeves). However, once Hope’s mother started living in the United States, she began dressing more modern. Hope said her mother wears business clothes to work, but when she’s not at work, she wears jeans and cardigans.

Hope’s father said the deadline for Hope and her sisters to start wearing the *hijab* is college. He told them that it was a lifetime commitment to wear the *hijab* and the expectation is that they don’t take it off, so he wants them to think seriously about it. Hope shared, “They [her parents] don’t see it as like a forceful thing. Like, you know, my mom's like… when you're ready…they enforce that. But they're like, ‘We're not gonna force you because when you put it on, that's a lifetime's commitment and, like, you can't put it on and take it off.’ And they're like, ‘We don't want you to feel awkward,’ but he's [my father] like, ‘When you go to college, you're a grown up. Get it on.’ I'm like, ‘Okay’” (Hope, personal communication, December 23, 2017).

**Future challenges.** Hope worried that one challenge to accomplishing her future goals is the ignorance of others. Hope said she worries that once she gets her education, there will still be people who think they are right even if the facts don’t match up. Hope shared that she is nervous for her future because she just keeps getting reminded of how “bias things are and, like, society” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). For example, she shared the story of a YouTuber named Adam Saleh who got kicked off of an airplane flight for speaking Arabic while on the phone with his mother. He was telling her that he will see her soon, but a woman on the airplane told the stewardess she felt uncomfortable. Hope knows that she is just 16 years old and
she is trying to figure out life, but she believes that she can be part of the generation that changes things for everyone else.
The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings from the cross-case analysis of identity construction across the four participants. The analysis revealed a number of major findings. First, the participants negotiated between multiple identity options and some options were more salient than others. Additionally, the data revealed that identity is fluid, dynamic, and multifaceted. Second, participants found outlets through social media and familial relationships to affirm their ethnic, national, and religious identities, especially in the face of negative media portrayal and stereotypes of Muslim individuals. Third, the four women negotiated gender expectations and the decision to wear the *hijab* as integral to their gender and religious identities. Finally, school shaped the participants’ identities by silencing diverse student voices; however, the participants found routes of resistance through extracurricular activities and education. The section below illustrates these findings.

**Identity Options and Context: Sojourners**

The four participants recognized the multiplicity of their identities. Spirit identified herself as a Palestinian, American, Muslim, female, sister, daughter, friend, student, athlete, future nurse, and southerner. Jordan described herself as a Palestinian, American, Muslim, female, sister, daughter, friend, educator and future wife. Halsey described herself as a Palestinian, Jordanian, American, Muslim, female, sister, musician, peacemaker, and future pediatrician. Hope described herself as a Palestinian, American, Muslim, female, sister, daughter, friend, student, traveler, future doctor, and future wife. While the participants negotiated between multiple identity options, some of the options became more salient, or more important than others depending on contextual factors, such as the geographical location of the participants as
well as the community in which they found themselves living in. Below is a discussion of the importance of these contextual factors in the identity construction of the participants.

**Divided between the United States and the Middle East**

The participants experienced two different kinds of shifts in geography that affected their identity construction: moving to a new place and traveling back and forth between the United States and the Middle East. As a result of these shifts in geography, the participants had multiple identity options available to them. More importantly, the changes in geography influenced their identity construction as they were forced to reflect on their biculturalism in multiple geographies.

Being in regular contact with these two different cultural and sociopolitical settings encouraged a unique and constant negotiation of identities. Three of the four girls traveled back and forth between the United States to Palestine every other summer. When Spirit traveled to Palestine to visit her grandmother and other family members, her American identity was more salient to her than her Palestinian one. She was more detached from her homeland in aspects such as her ethnic identity. For example, Spirit discussed *Eid* in Palestine as much different than how she celebrates it with her family in Illinois. She said in Palestine, the customs were much different than those in the States during *Eid*, and, thus, were boring. She said in Palestine everyone visits each other’s homes and they don’t go out and have fun. She described it as having to serve her family members, whereas in Illinois, she loved taking off from school, getting dressed up, going to prayer, and going out to dinner with her family. She saw herself as taking a more active role in celebrating a religious holiday in the United States. She describes this as the American side of her. However, in Palestine, she saw the celebration of *Eid* as a more passive role wherein you just sit at home and wait around while family members come to visit and you serve them. That was the Palestinian side of her.
However, when Spirit visited Palestine on her Palestinian ID card, she was reminded about how she was restricted to areas in the West Bank. She was not allowed to travel to Jerusalem without a visa. She was willing to take risks and smuggle herself in one of the passing buses because she believed the rules were not fair for Palestinians. In this instance, Spirit’s Palestinian identity became most salient when living in Palestine because she faced pushback against her Palestinian identity through restrictions imposed upon her and other Palestinian Americans living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by the Israeli government.

Moreover, while Jordan identified as Palestinian, the last time she visited Palestine was when she was a baby. However, Jordan traveled back and forth from Amman in Jordan every other summer. Jordan said that there were many Palestinians that lived in Jordan so it felt like home even though it was not Palestine. Regardless, Jordan’s travel back and forth helped her see how different lifestyles are from her cousins who lived in Amman, Jordan. For example, Jordan shared that in Illinois there were more limits set for her by her parents and older siblings because she was living in a white American community. However, in Amman, she noticed that her mother allowed her go out with her cousins past her curfew because she was with family who was Palestinian and Muslim just like her. She also noticed that in Amman boys and girls were allowed to go out together, whereas in Illinois, young Muslims were criticized for going out in mixed company. Therefore, she saw her life in Illinois as more conservative. Nevertheless, she preferred it over the life in Amman because it was what made sense to her and what she was used to. Also, she identified herself as being religious and her life in Illinois matched with her religious norms, whereas the lifestyle in Amman was less religious in her perspective.

Hope was from a village in Palestine called Beit Iksa. Hope shared that she grew up in a rural setting and when she visited back home, she felt more American at times because she was
used to a more metropolitan context. However, when talking about politics related to Israel and the incident she experienced during one of her visits to Palestine, she was reminded of her Palestinian roots and solidarity with the Palestinians living in Palestine. When Hope’s cousin retold the events surrounding the scuffle at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, it reaffirmed Hope’s Palestinian identity. Therefore, whenever politics was talked about or the struggle with Israeli defense forces (IDF), Hope’s Palestinian identity became most salient. Overall, the travel back and forth between the United States and the Middle East and travel within the United States across different communities allowed the participants to reflect on aspects of their identities that matched with what resonated most with them within the geographical and community contexts in which they found themselves. It was clear from the data that the girls’ Palestinian identities were most salient in all geographical contexts due to the resistance they faced from being Palestinian.

Moreover, this study showed that not only was geographical location an important factor in identity construction, but the community in which the participants found themselves in also played a role. Depending on the community, some identity dimensions were more salient than others. Two of the girls traveled between two states within the United States and their identity options shifted based on the communities by which they were surrounded. Spirit lived in South Carolina before moving to Illinois. Halsey moved to Illinois from California this year. She shared that in California, she and her siblings were probably the only Arabs in the entire school. She said the school was predominantly white American and Mexican. Therefore, her familial identity as a sister and a daughter was more salient because she received affirmation of her Palestinian American identity at home. Halsey shared she was only friends with one Mexican girl at school who was tolerant of differences. In Illinois, Halsey noticed that her new school has a lot of hijabis and teachers who are Palestinian just like her. She said even though she was new
to the school, she predicted she would like it because there were others that represent her Arab and Muslim identity.

Spirit moved from South Carolina to Illinois. She said her life there was more family-oriented because there wasn’t a large Arab-Muslim population there, so she stuck with her family to receive that affirmation of identity. However, when Spirit moved to Illinois, she experienced a large Arab—specifically Palestinian—and Muslim community. Even though Spirit was proud of her Palestinian roots in South Carolina, she said life in South Carolina was more relaxed because there were not others there to judge or hold anyone accountable in following cultural and religious norms. As a result, Spirit identified more as a white Southerner while she was living in South Carolina and when she traveled there to visit her family that still resided there. Spirit described her family in South Carolina as less religious and more white. She noted that life in South Carolina “[was] more, like, white, like, less religious and 'cause [sic] my aunts still live in South Carolina, so they don’t really go to, like, the mosque or, like, know much or they do know much but they, they choose to not, like, you know” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017).

Identity is Fluid, Dynamic, and Multifaceted

Identity is not only multifaceted, but it is also fluid and changes over time. This was most apparent with the comparison of the participants’ elementary school artifacts to the artifacts of today. During the interview process, the participants were asked to bring in three to five artifacts (see Appendix D) that represented their identity currently. They were then asked to explain why each artifact was important to them and then assign the artifact a hashtag of what it represented. Out of 14 artifacts that were discussed and brought in, only one of them directly related to the context of school. This was another piece of evidence that revealed the school failed to validate the existence of second generation Palestinian-Muslim female adolescents because none of the
girls brought in an artifact related to their school context. The girls brought in artifacts that were important to them and held strong significance in their lives.

For example, Table 5-1 below shows a comparison of the artifacts that the participants chose to put in their elementary school time capsule with the artifacts they chose to represent their identity today. The table shows that the majority of items chosen for the elementary school time capsule were mainly items that they were interested in during elementary school. Some of the items represented their family. The artifacts the participants chose to represent their identity today presented broader themes, such as nationality, school, friendship, and religion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Elementary Time Capsule</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Current Artifacts</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>A Toy Horse named Spirit Clifford the Red Dog Books</td>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Hutta (Palestinian Scarf) Palestine Pendant with a heart center Dreamville Lanyard Family Photo</td>
<td>Nationality Nationality Interest Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Something Chicago Bulls Stuffed animal</td>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Arabic Nameplate Childhood Photo Varsity Letters</td>
<td>Family &amp; Nationality Family &amp; Nationality School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsey</td>
<td>Guitar Pick Family Photo Necklace from Grandfather</td>
<td>Hobby Family Family &amp; Nationality</td>
<td>Bracelet with Palestine Flag Necklace from Friend Family Photo</td>
<td>Nationality Friendship Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Nintendo DS Jump Rope Necklace from Grandmother</td>
<td>Interest Family</td>
<td>Ka’bah Souvenir Prayer Beads Canvas of Haiti Tutreez (Palestinian Embroidery) Bracelet</td>
<td>Religion Religion &amp; Friendship Interest Nationality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For example, the artifacts that the girls collected represented six main themes: nationality, friends, family, school, interests, and religion. However, some of the artifacts could be categorized under multiple themes. One artifact that comes to mind was a Palestinian bracelet with flags that Halsey shared. Halsey assigned it a hashtag of ‘home.’ However, it could also be categorized under family and nationality. Another artifact shared by Spirit was a hutta that she wears when she performs with her debka club. This could be categorized under the theme of nationality as well as interests and hobbies.

Additionally, the researcher coded the artifacts and found that five out of the fourteen artifacts gathered across the girls represented their Palestinian identity. Additionally, three out of fourteen artifacts collected represented the participants’ family. Two out of fourteen represented their friends. Also, two out of fourteen represented their hobbies and interests. One out of fourteen represented their religion, and finally, one out of fourteen represented their school life. Jordan was the only participant to select an artifact that represented her school life. She brought in letters that represent the abbreviation of her middle school. Jordan assigned the artifact a hashtag of middle school because she said during middle school was when she got a whole new set of friends that helped her deal with the changes that were happening in her life. She shared that once she hit middle school, it was hard for her to connect with the same girls she was friends with in elementary school; therefore, middle school was a time when she was able to connect with other Palestinian-Muslim female adolescents that were going through similar experiences as she was. Jordan shared that the new group of friends she made in middle school were still her lifelong friends today. Table 5-2 below summarizes the themes represented in the artifacts that were gathered for this study.
Table 5-2. Summary of Themes from Artifact Elicitation and their Hashtags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Interests</th>
<th>Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#Home</td>
<td>#Happiness</td>
<td>#Family</td>
<td>#Middle School</td>
<td>#OG (Original Gangster)</td>
<td>#ForAllah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#Childhood</td>
<td>#Sisters</td>
<td>#Memories</td>
<td>#Growing up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#FreePalestine</td>
<td>#Roots</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#DemmeFallestini</td>
<td>(my blood is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The Role of Media: Finding an Outlet in the Face of Stereotyping and Racism

The four participants made sense of their identity in the backdrop of sociopolitical events, particularly as they are portrayed through the media. All four of the girls admitted to feeling frustrated due to the stereotypes that are placed on them through the American media via news broadcasting. The participants all identified as American; however, the media portrayed them in a negative light. The data revealed the participants are discriminated against and marginalized within society because of the media’s portrayal of their ethnic and religious identities. The way the participants made sense of the media images was through a foundational meaning-making lens (Abes et al., 2007). All four of the participants recognized the negative stereotypes against them and they actively sought ways to combat the threat to their identity. As a result of the pushback they felt towards their identity, all four participants sought alternate and positive images through social media and family to affirm their identities. The participants chose social media as their medium for two reasons: (1) they were skilled in technology use and (2) they genuinely wanted to know what was happening on the ground by eliminating the media’s interpretation of what was happening in Palestine. The participants sought social media sources that shared first-eye accounts of what was happening back home. The participants also leaned on family because they shared identity dimensions and had strong familial units that the participants leaned on for support.
Social Media

The participants viewed the media as a perpetuation of negative stereotypes towards Muslims and Arabs. They sought alternate ways through the media that affirmed positive images of their identity. The role social media played in identity construction for the participants in this dissertation was that it provided them with alternate ways to stay connected to Palestine. More importantly, it provided the girls with affirmations of identity that were not present in the American media.

Spirit stayed away from the news because she referred to it as “fake.” She went on to say that whenever an Arab or Muslim committed a crime, the person was immediately labeled a “terrorist” and “they [American media] like put the title over everybody else” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). Spirit was frustrated because she also identified as an Arab and as a Muslim, but she felt included in the term “terrorist.” Spirit felt the terms “Arab,” “Muslim,” and “terrorist” were used interchangeably in the American media. Spirit struggled because she also identified as “American,” but society did not perceive her as an American because of her other identity dimensions. Due to the American media, Spirit felt that identifying as Arab and Muslim countered her American identity. Moreover, Spirit’s parents also discouraged her from getting into politics. As a result, Spirit stayed connected to Palestine through FaceTime. She said she FaceTimed her grandmother to stay connected to her family and to what was happening in Palestine.

Jordan tried to stay up-to-date in politics in Palestine, but she believed the media failed to represent Arab Muslims in a truthful way. Jordan believed there was a double standard on crimes committed by white males in comparison to Arab-Muslim males. When a white man committed a crime, it was considered an individual act; however, when an Arab Muslim committed a crime, his ethnicity and religion were placed on trial, and Jordan believed that was not fair. Jordan’s
family felt the same way. She said they tried to stay connected but they found it easier to stay out of politics and away from the news by turning off the television and disengaging with the outside world about politics as it related to Arab Muslims. Jordan’s dad tried to stay informed, but every time he turned on the news channels, American or Arabic, or read a newspaper article, he got frustrated. She said, “It burns his, like, soul inside” (Jordan, personal communication, December 18, 2017). Jordan also shared that it was not just the harmful images through the American media but the graphic images of Arabic news channels that discouraged her and her family to be involved in politics. Moreover, even though Jordan said her parents stayed out of politics due to the harmful portrayal of Arab Muslims, her parents were still activists. For example, Jordan shared that the day after President Trump declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel, her mother attended a protest in solidarity of Palestine. She also shared that her mother read newspaper articles to stay informed about what was happening back home. Just like her parents, Jordan struggled with the harmful images of Arab Muslims in the media, so she sought alternate routes of staying connected to Palestine. She did this through social media outlets such as Snapchat, Twitter, What’s App and FaceTime.

Halsey shared that she felt Jerusalem wasn’t America’s to give. She and her entire family were somber after they heard the news. She wanted to attend the protest in Downtown Chicago, but she was worried it would get out of hand like the last protest she attended in California. In California, Halsey and her family attended a protest where fights broke out and police were holding the Palestinian protesters back. The Israeli protesters were left alone. Halsey said, “Like, it was so bad. Like, there was a bunch of fights, and, like, the police were, like, holding us back. But, like the Israeli--the Israelis, they [the police] weren't holding them back. It was just us. It wasn’t fair” (personal communication, December 14, 2017). Halsey shared that her family stayed
away from politics because it was frustrating how they were portrayed in the media. Her father watched the news every morning before work to learn of the headlines, but it did not go beyond that. Halsey used Skype and Viber to stay connected to her family that lived overseas.

Contrary to the first three participants, Hope’s family encouraged her to get involved in politics as a way to change the narrative about Arabs and Muslims. For example, after President Trump’s declaration, Hope’s father told her that President Trump was a political leader and if she didn’t like the changes he was making, “get involved in the politics” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). Hope’s father also acknowledged that the news was the talk of his law firm that day as well and the declaration was all over the news outlets. Hope shared with her father that President Trump’s decision was not fair and his decision was encouraging others to express hate speech. Hope stated that everyone at school and in the community was upset because a girl posted on Snapchat a “dis” about Muslims and Palestinians. The girl had posted, “I just, like, went to school today and saw a lot of Muslim flags, and I’ve never been more disgusted in my life!” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). Someone reposted her comment on Twitter and everyone had something to say. Hope said all the Muslims and Palestinians “reamed” her. She said she was “pissed off” by the tweet because it they weren’t even Muslim flags; they were Palestinian flags. Hope’s father told her not to engage like the others on social media. He said social media was not a way to solve problems. He shared, “If you want to raise awareness [on social media], sure, that is fine, but…now that girl is never gonna [sic] like Muslims. She is never gonna [sic] like Palestinians because all the Muslim Palestinians are bashing her, cyber bullying her” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017). Her father told her that she shouldn’t use ignorant comments to defend yourself and
instead that she should bring awareness to the situation because, “you don't have rights when you are Palestinian” (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017).

Hope also shared that she did a project for her school about crimes in the United States and another stereotype was that immigrants, such as Arabs, commit most of the crimes, but in fact, more crimes are committed by Caucasians. Moreover, Hope said her parents were into politics, especially her father because he was a lawyer; however, her father was “really fed up with it” (personal communication, December 17, 2017). He watched multiple news channels, American and Arabic, to stay up-to-date with headlines. Hope shared that her father also got frustrated when he saw how Arab Muslims were portrayed in today’s media. She said her father liked to get involved rather than just staying up-to-date on news headlines. For example, he attended conferences such as AMP (American Muslims for Palestine) and “hangs out” in the lobby in the hopes that he will get interviewed so that he can contribute to true accounts about what was happening in Palestine. He also attended protests and encouraged Hope and her sisters to attend to stay involved and contribute to truthful and positive portrayals of Arab Muslims, especially Palestinians.

While Spirit, Jordan, and Halsey’s family tried to stay away from politics as a coping mechanism to deal with the negative portrayal of Arabs and Muslims in the media, Hope’s father encouraged her to get involved and change things by making others aware of what was happening in Palestine. Moreover, Hope stayed connected to Palestine through Snapchat posts that showed what daily life in Palestine was really like. She also used Snapchat to stay connected to her family that still lived in Palestine.

**Familial Relationships**

Another area where the participants sought affirmations of their identity against the sociopolitical backdrop was through their membership within their family context. In the media,
the participants shared they were positioned as “terrorists,” or as Abu El Haj posits, “enemies within” (2007, p. 287). The phrase “enemies within” refers to the fact that while the media portrays Arab Muslims as outsiders, the girls considered themselves to be American too but they also had the Palestinian side of them that was part of their identity. As a result, the participants sought their membership within their family as roadmaps on how to live their lives. All four of the participants had strong familial bonds. They spoke fondly throughout each of the interviews every time they referenced their family relationships. Halsey shared, “We're all pretty close. That's, like, I'm close—we're closer to each other than other people. So, they would say I'm annoying but, like, at times we're all the people we need” (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017).

Moreover, for every participant, they all chose women within their family, either their mother or a sister, as role models. Spirit related that her mother and older sister were the women in her life whom she respected the most. Spirit also deemed her mother to be her best friend. She said, “My mom’s, like, kind of my best friend …like, she laughs with me like she’s like me. I feel like we get along a lot” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). She shared that her mother was her best friend and she could share anything with her. She also considered her sister a role model. She related that there was an expectation for her to live up to the standards her sister set for herself and, thus, there was a sibling rivalry between Spirit and her sister. Spirit shared that her sister was studying to be a nurse and was engaged to be married. Spirit also wanted to study to become a nurse. She had plans to study at the same school once she graduated high school at the end of this year. She saw herself getting married as well. She hoped that she would be able to finish her education before she gets married but she wouldn’t mind getting engaged before the end of her studies, just like her sister. Spirit’s sister represented for
her an example of an educated bicultural Palestinian-American woman who was engaged to be married. While the media portrayed Arab Muslims in a negative light, Spirit looked to local role models in her family as true examples of how to live her life.

Jordan confided that her oldest sister was also her role model. She shared that her sister never finished college because she started her family before graduation and it was just too hard for her to finish. However, Jordan saw her sister as a successful woman because she was selfless and always put her family life first. This was a quality that Jordan valued above anything else and that included education. Jordan hoped that she would finish school to become a teacher before she gets married. She saw marriage as a potential obstacle in fulfilling her goal of becoming a college graduate. Marriage was a potential issue for her in completing her college degree because she believed that the needs of one’s family takes precedence over all things, and that included academics. Both Jordan’s mother and sister fell into the narrative of not being able to finish their college degree because they got married and had children. Jordan said,

After she [Jordan’s sister] got married she was still in school and then she got pregnant and when she had her daughter it’s just like she got so busy in that, that she could…never went back. She finished her, uh, bachelors or, uh, [associate degree]…yeah…she did two years at Moraine and then a year and a half at Du Page College of nursing and then she just didn’t finish it off. She got engaged at 21, married at 22, had her kid at 23. (Spirit, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Like Jordan, Halsey chose her older sister as her role model. She said that when she started college, she chose to wear the hijab. Halsey admired her sister’s will power to put on the hijab at the start of her college career. She wished that someday soon she would have the same will power to make that decision for herself. She predicted it would also be at the start of college. Moreover, Halsey wanted to study to become a doctor just like her sister who was studying to become a doctor at a top university in Illinois.
Finally, Hope related that her mother was her role model for multiple reasons. First, Hope admired her mother’s strength in advocating for education. Hope’s mother grew up in Saudi Arabia, and after she finished high school, it wasn’t accepted for her mother to go to college on her own. Hope’s mother applied to go to school in the United States and she received the opportunity to go. All she wanted her father’s blessing. Somehow, Hope’s grandfather gave in and said that he didn’t want to be the reason for getting in the way of her opportunity. Hope’s mother left for college in the United States and that was the last time she was under her father’s roof. Hope also admired her mother for keeping her hijab on once she came to the United States. Her mother wore her hijab and niqab (a veil covering the face) from age 12 onward. It was an expectation for Hope’s mother to wear the hijab once she hit puberty. Hope said the environment in Saudi Arabia was more conservative, and it was a requirement for all girls to don the hijab. From Hope’s perspective, the fact that her mother made a conscious decision to keep her hijab on once she immigrated to the United States was another testament of her mother’s strength.

Hope confides,

Because she [Hope’s mother] lived inside the Saudi Arabia she put on the scarf when she was 12. But it wasn’t just the scarf. She put the niqab [a veil covering the face] too. But then she hated it. Like, when she came in [to the United States], she’s like, ‘There’s no reason to wear the niqab.’ But they made her do that. Yeah, she just wears the hijab yeah. No, my mom’s so modern. She wears jeans and, like, she—because she works she’s literally in business clothes- so when she's not [working], she's wearing jeans. And then, she just wears a cardigan with the shirt like-- Yeah, she's not strict on that either, like. Because she realized, she's like, ‘We have to adapt.’ She's like, ‘You can't scare the people away when you are in America.’ (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017)

Hope also shared that her mother made a decision to dress more modern and went back to school to receive a professional degree. Both actions made her a role model for Hope. Hope also admired her mother when her father went back to school to become a lawyer and her mother was the one that had to take the lead in supporting the family. Hope said one day she dreamed of
becoming as strong as her mother. She wished she had her mother’s strength in actualizing her dreams of becoming a doctor and a mother.

In the face of adversity or trying to belong somewhere, all four of the participants received positive affirmations of identity through their relationships with their family, particularly from the women in their family. The participants connected and identified with the life trajectory the women in their families paved for themselves, and as a result, they chose them to be their role models in life.

**Gender Expectations**

Another finding that appeared through the data was the impact of gender expectations on the identity construction of the participants within this study. The participants’ awareness of the gender differences within their culture came through as a result of their experiences with the males in their family. Finally, gender expectations were also important whenever future goals such as marriage were discussed. While Spirit and Jordan valued education, getting married and starting a family was also a top priority for them. However, Halsey and Hope believed that academics was more important or could work in conjunction with marriage and having a family. Finally, to wear or not to wear the hijab also influenced how the participants shaped their gender dimension of identity. These points are illustrated below.

**Gender Differences: Modern Day Princes**

All four participants shared right away that the boys in their families received different treatment than the girls in the family. Spirit mentioned that her only brother was treated like a “prince” wherein he was never asked to do chores. He also received privileges such as receiving an iPad and a phone at a younger age than Spirit and her sister. Spirit said,

They [Spirit’s parents] usually favor my younger brother cause, like, he’s the only boy. It doesn’t bother me but, like, I know it bothers my older sister cause, like, when she was little, she didn’t get anything, like, close to what he would get
like…like…they got like iPads so young, but, like, with her, she got her first phone, like, ninth grade and, like, she always like, like yells at my parents for, like, making, like, when he doesn’t listen, like, she’ll blame it on them for, like, making him, like, letting him do whatever he wants but when they don’t want it, like, it never works. Like, so he ends up doing whatever he wants and she hates that. (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

Spirit recognized that this was a part of the culture and a fact of his birth order as “the baby” in the family and due to the fact that he was the only boy in the family. He also received “prince status.” For example, Spirit shared that he was not expected to partake in the family chores.

Spirit said,

No, he never helps. Never ever. Like, my mom never asks him to do anything but, like, it’s always on us. It’s always my older sister and me and sometimes my little sister, but no, he never touches anything. He’s like her little prince. He gets prince status. (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

Spirit made it clear that her older sister argued with her mother about how her brother was treated differently, but Spirit shared that the differential treatment did not bother her. Even so, she still made it a point to bring it in up on multiple occasions throughout the interview sessions, showing her awareness.

Jordan’s older brother was the only boy in her family, and he also had ‘prince status.’

Jordan shared,

My brother’s an only boy so he definitely, he definitely gets that ‘prince’ card…he gets whatever he wants, even at a young age. I remember, like, even when I was younger, he used to get away with a lot even until today. Definitely his way. He has a short temper too, so it’s just like they [my parents] kind of just go with the flow. (Jordan, personal communication, December 18, 2017)

At the same time, Jordan shared that she loved her brother and he was almost like a second father to her as he always told her what to do. While Jordan recognized males are treasured as part of Palestinian culture, she also recognized that her brother received special treatment as being the only male in a family of three female siblings.
Halsey was also aware of the gender differences within Palestinian culture. For example, Halsey shared that her mother faced adversity at a young age but did the best she could with the hand she was dealt. Halsey’s mother was the oldest girl in her family and she was appointed the caretaker of her father when he became ill and was hospitalized after suffering from a heart attack. Even though Halsey’s mother had a brother who was older than her, due to traditional gender roles, Halsey’s mother was expected to help her mother and take care of her father. Halsey’s mother was never afforded the opportunity to finish school beyond eighth grade. Halsey shared that as a result of her mother’s experience, her mother emphasized the importance of education for all of her children. Halsey related her mother’s narrative of having to take care of her ill father at the expense of her academic career. She said,

Yeah, even though her brother was older than her, he wasn’t close to his dad and he was a middle school boy. It's gonna—obviously, it's gonna be the girl. (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017)

Hope also recognized that Palestinian culture valued boys. She realized this through her own mother’s story of always having to explain to others that she was happy with her three daughters and she was not interested in having more children in the hopes of conceiving a boy. Hope shared that her parents are also addressed as the mother and father of their oldest daughter in jest because of the absence of a son. While Hope understands the cultural norm of the importance of a boy, she was proud of her mother for being a strong woman and not letting those cultural stereotypes interfere with the life she built for herself. However, Hope related that there was one male cousin on her father’s side that was considered the “token male” or brother for the entire family and he was treated slightly different because he was the only male in the family on her dad’s side. Hope’s family was very reflective of the cultural gender norms, and they made it a point not to fall into those stereotypes. Hope set the same standards for herself as she wanted to become a working and educated woman. Hope shared that the last time she visited Beit Ilksa for
her cousin’s wedding, she saw examples of many women who did not work outside of the home and she wanted to change the narrative for her own future life.

While gender was not an identity dimension that was as salient for Spirit and Jordan as it was for Halsey and Hope, all four of the participants recognized that there are differences amongst genders and they were able to see this through their membership within their family.

**Traditional Gender Roles and Marriage**

Another relationship the young women identified which shaped their identity construction was traditional gender roles as it related to their future in terms of having a career and marriage. Two of the four participants followed traditional gender roles, while the other two rejected traditional gender roles and identified career and life plans that went against what was culturally expected of them.

Spirit and Hope shared their college and career goals; however, they recognized that marriage and family might be a challenge to their future academic and career success. The girls spoke about their roles as future wives and mothers fondly and used the word “challenge” because they did not see those roles as obstacles to their college and career goals. They saw their future identities as wives and mothers as priorities over their other identities of students and career women. For example, Jordan shared that her oldest sister was her role model but that her sister didn’t finish school. Jordan said that her sister got engaged at 21, married at 22, and had her first child at 23. Therefore, Jordan believed that,

> Maybe, I think life and having a husband and all that would get in the way of, like, focusing because once you get married, you have to put your focus on, like, someone else, like, it’s like you’re caring for them. It’s like you can’t have to take the focus all for yourself and be, like, selfish but, like, not all your concerns are gonna be about you so you’re caring for someone else, so your schoolwork might come second. If it’s like he needs something or something happens, like, life gets in the way. (Jordan, personal communication, January 2, 2018)
In this quote, Jordan exhibited her belief that it was more admirable to care for one’s family, husband and children included, than to be selfish and only think about finishing school. She even empathized with her mother and older sister who both fell into that same narrative. Jordan shared that her sister was never able to finish her schoolwork because she became pregnant with her first born child. This quote supported the theme of traditional gender roles and how Jordan subscribed to those roles as they were perpetuated within her family.

Halsey and Hope shared stories of family and community members that had not finished school because of their roles as females in their family and not accepting academia as an acceptable life path for themselves. As a result, Halsey and Hope refused to allow that to be their future. While they saw themselves getting married and having a family, they did not see marriage and motherhood as detriments to their academic and career goals. Hope shared,

When you're going in [the territories of Palestine], you kinda [sic] feel like you're in [the country of] Jordan. And, like…you know what I mean, like, the shopping malls and it's kinda a little more modern. And then you go into, like, my village, and it's, like, you don't see any girls out. Like, all the girls are inside and all the guys are just working at the little shops. It's cute, but it's so old-fashioned. (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017)

While Hope identifies as being Palestinian and proudly shares that her roots are in Beit Iksa, Palestine, she also has a hard time reconciling the traditional gender roles prevalent in the village with her ideas of wanting to get an education and work outside of the home.

**The Hijab: Personal Choice, Discrimination, and Responsibility**

The *hijab* was an important piece of identity construction for all four of the participants. Even though one of the criterions for this study was choosing girls that do not wear the *hijab*, all four of the participants brought up the topic of the *hijab* during the interview sessions. Across the participant interviews, the discussion surrounding the *hijab* was characterized in multiple ways. First, while the choice to wear the *hijab* was a personal one, it was an expectation of their
families to wear the *hijab* at some point in their lifetime. Moreover, while the choice to wear the *hijab* was celebrated within their individual families, there were some inconsistencies that influenced how they made sense of the choice to wear the *hijab*. Additionally, the participants were aware that wearing the *hijab* was considered an outside physical marker that made one a target of discrimination. The participants were aware that once they chose to wear the *hijab*, they would no longer be able to “pass” (Nadal et al., 2012) or blend within society or within their school context as anything other than Muslim. Finally, the decision to wear the *hijab* was a serious one, but it was one of personal choice that would influence all aspects of their lifestyle because of the responsibility that comes along with making the choice to wear the scarf.

**The *hijab* as a personal choice and an expectation.** Across the participant interviews, whenever the discussion of the *hijab* came up, the girls emphasized that the decision to wear the *hijab* was a personal choice, yet it was a choice that was celebrated and expected by their families.

Spirit said that her parents did not force her to wear the *hijab*. She said it was clear to her that it was her choice. Spirit’s mother chose to wear the *hijab* when she got married and she believed she will do the same. Jordan also thought often about wearing the *hijab* and she always referenced her mother and older sister whenever she discussed her decision to wear it. She said that her mother wore the *hijab* but she decided to put it on late in life, which was after she got married at the age of 22. Jordan also shared that her older sister, who was Jordan’s role model, did not wear the *hijab*. However, Jordan identified herself as more religious than the rest of her siblings. Jordan said that her parents predicted that she will make the decision to wear the *hijab* in the near future because they recognized that she was more conservative than the rest of her siblings.
In the instance of Halsey, while her parents valued the decision of their children to wear the *hijab*, she shared that her mother made the choice not to wear the *hijab* yet. Halsey shared that her mother was still not ready to make that commitment, but Halsey’s mother hoped that it would happen for her sooner than later. Halsey, as was her mother, was proud of her older sister’s will power in the choice she made to wear the *hijab* as a freshman in college and as a pre-medicine major.

Hope shared that while her parents told her it would be her decision to wear the *hijab*, her father gave her a deadline of freshman in college. However, Hope joked that her older sister was already in college and she had still not make the decision to wear the *hijab*. Hope said she respected and loved her mother and was not sure when she will be ready to make that decision. Hope’s mother wore the *hijab* in Saudi Arabia once she hit puberty. It was an expectation in the country and community in which her mother lived. Therefore, Hope believed the choice her mother made to wear the *hijab* was one that did not require much reflection the way it does for a Muslim living within the United States.

Additionally, Hope shared that when she visited Falestine for her cousin’s wedding, it was a separate-gender wedding. Hope shared that when everyone was outside and making their way to the wedding hall, men and women were mixed and the bride’s family was concerned that the bride’s hair was showing (only men close to the bride and females are allowed to see a woman’s hair without *hijab*). Hope expressed,

I’m just so used to, like, the women freedom, I’m like—you know, it’s like, it’s normal for a girl to walk out on her wedding day, like, out in the limousine in her dress like it should be normal for that. Who cares if her hair is showing? (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017)

Hope used the term freedom to reference the tension surrounding the family’s dismay at the bride’s hair showing in public on her wedding day. Moreover, Hope’s use of the term freedom
was also in relation to the limited life options the women in Beit Iksa had. She referenced Beit Iksa as a small village where women were confined to a life of domesticity. Hope and her sister debated with her parents about having a mixed wedding. Hope said she would probably feel more comfortable with a separate wedding because that was what she was used to. She actually preferred a separate wedding because,

When it's a mix, it's just awkward. Cause [sic] I don't like-- I wouldn't dance in front of the guys. So, I'm just sitting down and then I feel bad cause the bride is like, ‘Come on’ and I'm like, ‘No.’ (personal communication, December 10, 2017)

Hope also shared that it was the expectation of her parents to have a separate wedding for all their daughters. Hope’s oldest sibling debated with her parents over this point because she wanted a mixed wedding. Hope’s sister said she wanted her father and her cousins, who are like her brothers, to see her in her wedding dress. While Hope’s father was flexible on this point, her mother was not. Hope would also like a mixed wedding for the same reasons her sister stated. However, she said she was used to the separate wedding idea.

**The hijab as a physical marker of discrimination.** Part of the discourse surrounding the hijab across the participant interviews was the physicality of the scarf. The hijab served a physical marker for women in Islam announcing to the world that they were Muslim. Again, although the girls chose not to wear the hijab yet, they made observations and shared experiences of friends and family who had to deal with the discrimination they faced as a result of their choice to wear the hijab. Even though they emphasized that the choice to wear the hijab was a personal one, they had to weigh this choice with the discrimination and stereotyping they faced outside of their religious community.

Spirit shared that she did not want to put the hijab on during her college education because she does not want to worry about wearing it. She predicted that college life would be hard enough and she did not want to add to that stress by wearing the hijab. Spirit said,
I feel like it will be hard worrying about like what I’m wearing on my head and also studying and doing my homework and going to school like just like the in and out like I feel like I just get sick of it from like getting frustrated one time and just take it off so just to be safe. (Spirit, personal communication, 2017)

The quote above exemplified that there was an added element of self-awareness in wearing the hijab. Through Spirit’s experiences with others who wore the hijab, she worried that people outside the religion would look at her differently in all aspects of life and she was not ready for that added responsibility on top of being a student in a new school as a college student.

Jordan shared that her mother was a lunch aide and her mother had positive experiences with wearing the hijab and she believed she would, too. However, Jordan also shared that other students looked at girls at school who wore the hijab differently. She said she noticed through their body language, such as the looks they gave, that they did not treat girls who wear the hijab at school the same way that they treated her. She said she was more accepted than her friends who chose to wear the hijab. When I asked her in what ways was she more accepted, she said you could just tell by their body language and the way other students interacted with them. She said, “It’s not the same” (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017). Overall Jordan believed that wearing the hijab would be a positive choice in her life and she was excited to wear the hijab once she was ready to make the decision to do so.

Halsey saw herself wearing the hijab in her future. She said she thought about it often, especially after her sister put it on but she was hesitant to make the choice because, “I think of everything that comes with it, and I'm not ready for it yet” (personal communication, December 21, 2017). Halsey also worried when she decided to put on the hijab because she thought that it was difficult for women to enter the medical field than a male; therefore, she thought it would be doubly hard for a woman wearing the headscarf to get into the medical field so she was not sure that it was a choice she would make at the start of her college career like her sister did.
Hope shared her experiences with other friends who wore the *hijab*, and she noticed that they always get looked at differently. For example, after a protest, Hope and her friends went out for dinner to a Mexican restaurant and she noticed that people were staring at her *hijabi* friends. She was also upset when the hostess made her and her friends wait to be seated as she took other groups of people that came in after her and without a reservation. Moreover, Hope also shared the struggle her *hijabi* friends had to go through when she went to competitions with the Model UN and competed with other schools. She said that people at the competition asked the most ignorant questions and it annoyed her.

As a result of these experiences, the participants were weary of making the choice to wear the *hijab*. While the girls valued those that made the choice to wear the *hijab*, they constantly reflected on when they would be ready to make the choice to put on the *hijab*. They wanted to make sure they were mentally strong enough to face how they would be treated outside of their community once they made that decision because according to them and their determination, they know that there was no going back once they made the decision to wear the *hijab*.

**The hijab and responsibility.** While the participants emphasized that the decision to wear the *hijab* was a personal and difficult choice they had to make in light of sociopolitical events, they also understood it was a permanent decision that would affect their lives in many ways. The participants shared their fears, concerns, expectations, and wonders about life after the *hijab*. Additionally, according to the participants, the decision to wear the *hijab* comes with a responsibility to be a model Muslim.

Spirit believed that wearing the *hijab* should be more than just a physical marker that identifies a woman as a Muslim, but it should be a marker of someone who was pious and
devoted to being a good Muslim and having good intentions. She shared how some of the aunts in her family who wear the hijab had actions that did not match their outer appearance and vice versa. While Spirit’s maternal aunts did not wear the hijab, she shared that they were family-oriented, caring, and have good intentions, which are some of the core tenants of Islam. However, she had some aunts that chose to wear the hijab and attend the mosque every Friday, but they exhibited behaviors of selfishness. For example, Spirit was frustrated with her aunt, or as she referred to her, “her uncle’s wife,” because her actions did not match up with her religious persona. For example,

Uhm, they’re like, like when you look at a religious…religious person like it’s not just like their dean (religion) but like also how they treat other people you know and the way they treat us is like not really good. Like they’ve never really cared to call. They never really care to come over like they try to always distance themselves but at the same time they’re like doing things like without us like they’re just like always like trying to distance themselves and it’s like not in a religious way. And when you see that you think to yourself like they’re fake like they’re so fake with the rest of the family and like you start to think like how are you going to be like completely religious and act like you know everything when you’re not even doing the right Muslim thing to do like they literally if, if we, if we disappeared off the face of the earth they wouldn’t ask about us like they wouldn’t care but like the way my mom is to them she calls like she does a lot of things for them…yea…and she…they go over more but like if it was the opposite way they wouldn’t care like they just don’t care. (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

The quote above revealed Spirit’s understanding that wearing the hijab was an indication of a pious person and one who functioned as a role model of Islam. One’s actions must match their intentions of good for others. Moreover, Spirit was aware of the responsibility that came with wearing the hijab and she worried that she might get sick of it and decide to take it off and would be letting herself down. She did not want to fail at her religion by not keeping the hijab on. Spirit also shared that she wanted a mixed wedding and she did not believe that she could do that if she wore the hijab before her wedding date. She also said that her parents were not strict
about having a mixed wedding, so that was what she wanted for herself. Her older sister was also planning on having a mixed wedding and getting her hair done, so she wanted to do the same.

Jordan’s family believed that she would be the first female in her family to wear the hijab. They said that she was the closest to her dean, or religion. Jordan believed that once you wear the hijab, you had to play the part. For Jordan, wearing the hijab meant being a role model. It meant being close to your religion. It meant being self-aware, but it also meant anticipating the perceptions of others with every decision one makes.

In conclusion, all of the participants came from families who emphasized that wearing the hijab was a personal choice. Moreover, all of the girls recognized the importance of wearing the hijab and the responsibility that came with it. Furthermore, all of the girls referenced the hijab in discussion with their female familial relationships because their identity was shaped through the important relationships they had with their family, particularly their female relationships.

**Identity Construction within the School Context: Silence and Resistance**

Throughout the narratives, the four participants had to make sense of their identity in the face of their school context. Here a distinct difference emerged between Hope’s experience in an all-girls Muslim school and the schooling experiences of the other three girls. The sections below highlight the differences in experiences as they related to their identity affirmation and the different ways the girls were able to develop a sense of belonging in each school context. This section was divided into two parts. The first part discusses the ways the participants felt silenced within their school context. The second section discusses the routes of resistance the participants took to ensure their voices were heard.
Silencing of Diverse Voices

Throughout the school day, the participants felt their identities were being silenced. First, the participants were silenced through their interactions with peers due to issues such as lifestyle differences due to culture and religion. Moreover, this lack of close peer connections further alienated them and distanced them from their individual school context. The participants were also critical of the lack of advocacy they faced from administrators and teachers. The school environment also played an integral role in silencing the girls. Finally, the lack of diverse voices within the school curriculum also failed to provide the participants affirmations of identity.

Below is a discussion of each aspect where the participants felt their voices were not being included. However, in some areas, Hope will serve as a contrasting voice due to the different school context in which she was a part of.

**Peer relationships.** All four of the participants talked about how different values and cultural norms related to drinking, dating, and gender set them apart from others at school. Three of the four participants struggled to develop a sense of belonging as soon as they entered middle school. In elementary school, Spirit, Halsey and Jordan did not notice differences between themselves and other students they attended school with. In fact, all three of the girls described themselves in a positive way during this period. Spirit said that she was “outgoing” and “funny” while Jordan said she was an “extrovert” in elementary school. Halsey said she was a “goofy” kid and she was always with a group of kids that were always laughing. Finally, Hope also enjoyed her elementary school and described it in terms of her friends. She said she “love[s] them to death” and “they are like my sisters” (personal communication, December 10, 2017).

However, once the girls entered middle school, they began to notice differences between themselves and the students they went to school with. They noticed that because of their cultural and religious differences, they struggled to find a place where they belonged. Spirit said the girls
she attended elementary school with began to change. They started going to parties and dating.

In high school, it got worse for her because Spirit said they started to do things that are haram, or activities forbidden in Islam, such as drinking and dating. She also decided to make friendships with girls that were just like her. Spirit said the new group of girls she made friends with in seventh grade were still her friends today. Spirit’s elementary school friends were all white, but now her friends were all Palestinian-American Muslims just like her. Spirit expresses,

We would just like…we, like, fell off the…like, I stopped talking to them in middle school. Just differences. Like…like…they like…they do different stuff like…hold on [long pause and looked down]. This is going to be anonymous right? [The researcher answered in the affirmative]. Like…like they start going into haram [activities forbidden in Islam]…so then, like, you start, like, drifting away from them. You know? Like parties and stuff…like, I used to go to them but then, like, I realized after a while, like, it’s not worth it and then I just started doing my own thing. (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

In the quote above, Spirit shared how she had succumbed to peer pressure and participated in activities, such as attending parties that went against what she was used to. However, in the end she chose not to be a part of those activities because the differences in lifestyle as dictated by her religion were just too great.

Jordan fell into the same timeline of events. She shared that the girls and boys she went to elementary school with were no longer her close friends. She said that her mother also had a hard time connecting with the parents of the other children because they drank alcohol and they allowed “guy friends over and it’s not okay for us” (Jordan, personal communication, December 26, 2017). Jordan used the pronoun “us” to reference Muslims, and she included herself in this distinction. Jordan said,

Definitely when you get into high school, it’s worse than elementary and middle school when it comes to differences. Like, high school is just a whole new world….The parties are worse. The conversations are worse…. I don’t know, personally I feel uncomfortable when things are talked about that I know that are, like, we’re not supposed to do them…. It’s just so normal for, like, people. It’s just, like, uh oh, yeah, let’s talk about this today, oh, and in the back of your head,
you’re thinking…how did you…how did you go through with that? How do you…how are you, like, cause [sic] maybe, cause [sic] I know right from wrong…. Like, girls and guys. Like, they just have no chill. Like, they’ll just make out in the hallway or they’ll just like have loud conversations about what they did last night or, like, they’re just…it’s just definitely, like, uh, you want to, like, exit the premises, like, you want to leave, like, I don’t want to hear or see that stuff. (Jordan, personal communication, December 18, 2017)

In this quote, Jordan explains her decision to retreat from her peers due to the differences in lifestyles. She found it easier to slip away from her social network rather than having to explain why she chose not to engage in some of the activities her peers were a part of.

Moreover, Halsey shared the same sentiment. She said she went to school with predominantly white students, but as soon as she entered middle school she noticed there were differences. Nevertheless, she never stayed long enough at one school to explore those differences as her parents decided to move her from one school to another school while she was living in California. Halsey shared that her parents didn’t want her to attend school with “bad kids,” so they moved her to a better school. Halsey had a difficult time explicating what she meant when she used the word “bad” to describe the students at her previous school, but she inferred those students being involved in gangs, sex, drugs, and alcohol. Halsey felt that the moves from one school to another were not fair because it was difficult for her to keep adjusting to a new environment. However, she said in the end it didn’t matter because she never got close with anybody anyways except one friend who was Mexican and was tolerant of the differences between them.

Finally, Hope spoke fondly of schooling experiences in an all-girl Islamic school. Hope was most excited about the fact that she could speak Arabic and talk about topics that she did not have to explain because everyone just knew what she meant, “It wasn’t awkward to talk about certain things or like expressing things because everyone was Muslim” (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017). Due to the fact that Hope’s school had a homogenous
student population in terms of ethnicity (for some of the girls) and religion, Hope felt she was on
equal footing as the other students and staff members. The fact that Hope was able to engage
with the social networks surrounding her at school, this contributed to her pleasant elementary
school experience. In fact, Hope’s elementary school friends were the same ones that she had in
high school. They were all from the Islamic all-girl school. She said, “I love them to death!
They’re like my sisters” (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017).

Hope shared that in her private school, she took Arabic language and religion classes and
that made it easy for her to maintain her native language as well as grow in her religious identity.
Moreover, Hope’s school had a celebration for Eid that allowed Hope to conjoin her school
context as well as her other identity dimensions such as her religious one. Hope also shared that
she had the same friends today as she did in high school and she was very close with them. She
said that it was easy being with them because they were,

Really understanding because a lot of them go through the same thing as me like
when we're all going out we're like this little Palestinian group. You know when
you're like in awkward situations like or when I travel with one of my friends like
and we're only getting checked because we are Muslim. (Hope, personal
communication, December 17, 2017)

It was only in the context outside of school where Hope faced ignorance. Outside of her school
was also where Hope was made aware of her differences between herself and her peers. While
Hope learned this lesson while she spent one year in a public American middle school, she talked
about her other experiences with ignorance that make her afraid for her future. Hope shared,

Because of their race they think that they are educated. But I don't know how to
counter that. Like, I-I'm like, 'you-you’re just so arrogant.’ Coz, like I'm telling
you, ‘No, you're wrong and I have the facts to show you. But you just keep um--
Like, you're coming back with an opinion and I'm giving you a fact, a fact.’ And I-I
don’t know where to go from there. (personal communication, December 23, 2017)

In this quote, Hope shared that she saw the ignorance of others outside of her religious and
ethnic community and she worried about leaving the context of her private school, where she
was accepted fully. She even experienced these differences through the college admissions process when she had to check off white for her race. That confused Hope because she said that society required her to identify as white, but she was not guaranteed or provided the same rights as someone else who identified as white. Hope shared,

> What they tell you is to put, ‘White,’ but like, how am I going to put, ‘White’ if I’m not getting those, like, standards in society if I’m, like, a Palestinian. So, I would just put, ‘other’ but I see that being unfair. (Hope, personal communication, December 23, 2017)

However, Hope did spend one year in a public middle school. Hope shared that she never really knew herself until she spent that year away from her “comfort zone.” She said that sometimes she would “slip up” and speak Arabic and the other students would look at her funny. Even during her lunch block, she would receive weird looks at the food her mother would pack her for lunch. Hope shared that her mother would spend hours cooking a meal and pack the leftovers for her lunch only to have her peers look at her strangely for eating food they were unfamiliar with.

**Lack of knowledge and advocacy from administrators and teachers.** The participants in this study were also aware of the lack of knowledge and advocacy on the part of administrators and teachers in validating their experiences as a marginalized group within their school context. The school environment also played a role in silencing the girls. These factors contributed to the strong student identity the participants built in order to shield them from rejection. For example, Spirit shared her frustration with classroom discussions surrounding stereotypes of Arab Muslims that were not stopped by the teachers. Spirit shared,

> like you hear about like terrorist attacks and stuff like that like they bring it up (in class) that they like always assume like it’s like us or like it gets talked about in the school where you feel like they think like all Muslims do all that stuff but like nobody really understands so you just stay quiet so like it just like burns us inside. There’s nothing you can do but just stay quiet because they don’t really understand. (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017)
Spirit continued to share that the teachers did not stop the discussions from happening so they must have thought the same way the students did. Spirit used the pronoun “us” in reference to Muslims. This quote showed that Spirit felt connected to her religious identity and felt discriminated against when Muslims were spoken about badly in school discussions. Based on school discussions of Muslims, Spirit received a negative view from teachers and students about her Muslim identity and she chose to stay quiet as a way to cope with the discrimination she felt.

Similarly, Spirit expressed not feeling connected to her current high school, teachers, administrators, or peers. She said she liked to stay professional with the teachers because she did not want her grades to be influenced by her teachers’ perceptions of her. She said, “I don’t like to get close with any teachers... I feel like I don’t want my grade to have to do with how the teacher sees me, like, I just want to do my work and let my effort show” (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017). She also shared that every time she tried to get close, she felt like the teachers did understand her. Spirit said that even the Arab teachers were hard to connect with because,

they are too Americanized, annoying. They know nothing. Have never even left the country. They act like they do but then at the same time they’ll treat you the same way that any other racist White person would. They just...you don’t feel the connection completely with them cause [sic] they’re always, like, a teacher, like, I can’t. (Spirit, personal communication, December 26, 2017)

This quote exemplified Spirit’s frustration with racism at her school. She chose to “stay professional” with teachers at her high school because she did not want to be discriminated against due to her ethnic and religious identity. Spirit decided to “stay professional” as a coping mechanism against the racism and discrimination she felt from white teachers and Arab teachers that acted White.

Moreover, Halsey professed to “staying out of the drama” at school but she got drawn in when she felt she had to advocate for herself whenever dimensions of her identity were being
threatened. For example, a teacher in Halsey’s middle school showed a video to commemorate 9/11 in her social studies class. A boy within the class said that “all Muslims are terrorists.” Halsey told him that what he was saying was wrong. The teacher sent them both to the principal’s office to sort out their disagreement. Halsey was sure that the principal would understand if she explained the circumstance but to her dismay he was more concerned for the students to follow classroom rules. Halsey shared the principal’s response,

Um, he [the principal] was like, ‘you guys know you can't do that in the middle of class. Like, if you have problems, keep it outside of school.’ He was like, ‘It's okay if you guys have different beliefs, but, like, you can't do that in my school.’ I was just more annoyed that he [the principal] only cared about his school and not about what we were arguing about but then I -- I moved from that school so I got over it, and then I never talked to that kid again. (Halsey, personal communication, December 7, 2017)

The ignorance of cultural and religious differences continued through high school for the three girls who attended American public high schools. All four of the participants discussed what happened at school the day after President Trump declared Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Three of the four participants were disappointed with the lack of support and advocacy they received from their respective schools. Spirit Jordan, and Hope all shared that while they were surprised to see so many non-Arabs such as teachers and students wearing the hutta they were frustrated in the fact that the teachers and students did not show support for the Palestinian cause on a daily basis. For example, Spirit shared that at first she thought it was just ignorance about Palestine that kept teachers and students from discussing or even referencing international issues related to Palestine in an objective way. However, when she saw the staff and students wore huttas on a solemn day for Palestinians, it angered her because in her perspective it was a testament to the fact that people were aware of Palestine and they chose not to talk about it or advocate for the Palestinian side. Moreover, Jordan shared an incident at school that was not supportive of the Palestinians that attended Jordan’s school. On the day President Trump
declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel, Jordan shared that a student in the parking lot waved a confederate flag from his car as he drove around in the parking lot. Another student took a picture of the event and posted the video on social media outlets. Within seconds, the video went viral. Many of the Arab students went up to the young man and told him that his actions were “not cool,” but it didn’t matter as he continued to wave the flag. Jordan was upset that none of the staff members, like the deans, came to stop him from parading his flag in the parking lot on a very serious day for Palestinians. Jordan was upset because the teachers and administrators did nothing to stop this display of ignorance. This speaks to the lack of advocacy Jordan felt on the part of school administrators and teachers.

Moreover, at Halsey’s school students did more than wear huttas, they even painted their face in the colors of the Palestinian flag. While Halsey felt that the school culture was accepting of other cultures, she also felt like no one cared. For example, she said that the Palestinians who wore the flag and the boy who painted his face the colors of the Palestinian flag didn’t face resistance from teachers or administrators but no one acknowledged what was happening either. When I asked Halsey how that made her feel she said, “It’s annoying. Yeah, I mean, like I thought it was a big problem, and it made me mad but no one brought it up” (Halsey, personal communication, December 14, 2017). Halsey felt like the Palestinian population at her school was invisible in plain sight.

In contrast, at Hope’s school, the entire day was devoted to talking about the declaration. The principal addressed it and the teachers discussed the situation in their classrooms. The school even allowed the girls to leave early to attend the protests downtown with the permission of their parents and noted this as an excused absence while encouraging the girls to go and represent Palestine. Everyone at school that day, such as administrators, students, and parents,
were wearing the *hutta*. It was like a sea of black and white at school. The mixed Islamic school across the street were also wearing the *hutta*. Hope said that she talked about President Trump’s decision in every one of her classes. The students couldn’t focus on their studies because they were angry about the decision. Finally, Hope’s principal announced,

> It’s okay to talk about it [President Trump’s announcement] because the majority of you guys are Palestinian, and you guys are Arab and Muslim, you guys understand each other, but be wary because you need to be mindful of how you guys talk…you guys are angry, that’s fine, but you can’t act angry when you’re outside, and you’re not in a safe zone. (Hope, personal communication, December 17, 2017)

Hope said she understood that the principal was just trying to get everyone to “dial it down” because others outside of their school environment might have seen their anger as extremist. She said the principal wanted them to get it all out but to be calm when talking about it with others so they do not fall into the stereotype the outside world had for Arabs and Muslims.

Hope even shared on Fridays all of the students from her school walked to the *masjid* across the street to pray because Fridays are a holy day for Muslims. The Sheikh in the *masjid* even addressed the situation and explained to the students the importance of not being angry and that it was okay to be sad by the decision that was made. Also, the mixed Islamic school across the street held a fundraiser to raise money for the people in Palestine and Hope was able to be a part of that. While all of the girls were frustrated by the declaration of President Trump, it manifested in different ways in their school contexts. Spirit, Jordan, and Halsey felt invisible while Hope’s school addressed the situation and helped to affirm her Palestinian identity. Hope’s school also supported her in channeling her frustration in positive ways.

**Absence of diverse voices within the school curriculum.** Another avenue where the participants felt silenced was through their school curriculum. Spirit and Jordan questioned the school curriculum because it failed to include diverse voices. For example, Jordan shared that
history was her least favorite subject because she does not get to learn about the history of the Arabs, and she wondered whose history was being taught to her. Jordan sets her thoughts aside because she knew her education was important, and in order for her to attain her academic goals, she needed to stay engaged and complete her work.

Furthermore, Hope shared that her one year in an American public middle school also taught her how ignorant and “uncultured” people can be. Hope said that in her class, the students would tell her that Palestine was not a country, and she kept quiet because she said, “But I even noticed, like, they would dis Palestine. Like, they’d say it’s not a country and I don't think they meant it intentionally. It’s just, like, how they grew up and, like, how they would talk” (Hope, personal communication, December 10, 2017). Hope divulged that tolerance was something that one grew up with. The students Hope encountered at her middle school were not aware or reflective of their discriminatory language towards other groups.

**Routes of Resistance**

The data revealed the participants were silenced through peer interactions as their lifestyles failed to match those of non-Palestinian Muslim students at their school. While school administrators and teachers were making strides to show support for their Palestinian students in ways, such as wearing Palestinian gear during a solemn day for Palestinians (President Trump’s declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel), there lacked an advocacy piece that was needed for the participants to feel acknowledged. The school environment failed to be tolerant of differences. Finally, an absence of diverse voices within the school curriculum left the participants dealing with stacked tensions on their school campus. As a result of the tensions they felt within their school context, the participants sought avenues of resistance. One way they were able to express themselves within their school context was through extracurricular activities. Even though it wasn’t during the school day as part of the core curriculum, the participants were
able to make sense of their ethnic and religious identities and the discrimination they faced because of their identities through song and dance. Another avenue of resistance was through education. While the participants struggled within their school context, they found education as an escape route. For the participants in this study, education served as a way of shielding them from the tension they faced at school. As a result, the participants constructed a strong student identity to escape their reality.

**Extracurricular activities.** Schools provided different spaces where identities were silenced but also spaces where they were affirmed. As noted earlier, Spirit, Halsey, and Jordan felt silenced throughout their school day as a result of their peers, the overall lack of understanding of their cultural backgrounds, and the curriculum. However, their involvement in extracurricular activities allowed them to receive affirmation of their identities and find a sense of voice. Spirit and Jordan were a part of The Diversity Club or as they called it, the *dabke* Club. Even though the girls were frustrated that they had to meet off campus and were not always afforded the same resources as other clubs on campus, they were at rehearsals two nights a week practicing for upcoming shows. Figure 5-1 below showcases one of the artifacts Spirit chose to represent her identity. It was a satin *hutta* worn during her performances. The hashtag she assigned to this artifact was #demmePalestini, which was an Arabic phrase that translates to “My blood is Palestinian.”

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 5-1.** This figure shows a Palestinian *hutta* that was made out of satin fabric. It was typically passed out during weddings and worn during *Dabke* performances at special events. It was also worn to show solidarity and pride for Palestinian culture.
This artifact was another example of Spirit’s connectivity and investment in the Diversity Club. This also related to how Spirit’s ethnic identity was most salient to her in her school context. Even though Spirit chose to “stay professional” in the context of dealing with administrators, teachers, and students who did not understand her, the Diversity Club was one space of school where she did not have to “keep it professional.” It served as an outlet where her ethnic identity was validated. While during the school day she felt silenced and chose to stay quiet, with the Diversity Club, Spirit was draped in a Palestinian hutta and was proud to dance and show that her blood was Palestinian. The Diversity Club was a space for the Spirit and Jordan to showcase their cultural identity.

Halsey’s outlet was the music club. Halsey played the guitar and sang. She practiced every Monday night at school for three hours in addition to the practicing she did at home throughout the week. Throughout the school day, Halsey said she stayed to herself and got her work done, but at the music club, she was able to be herself through her music. Unlike the other three, Hope’s identities were affirmed throughout the school day and she did not rely on extracurricular activities as a space to belong; however, she too was involved in extracurricular activities that also affirmed her ethnic identity.

Overall, the extracurricular activities the participants were involved in at school provided Spirit, Jordan, Halsey, and Hope an outlet for their Palestinian identity. The extracurricular activities also provided the girls with a space to affirm their identities. While Hope’s school experience contrasted with the other three girls. Hope’s private school experience in an all-girl Islamic school provided her with multiple opportunities throughout the school day to affirm her multiple identities. Hope was able to learn about the history of her ethnic heritage through her social studies curriculum. She was also a part of language and religion classes that supported her
Arabic language and Muslim identities. She also saw teacher role models who were Palestinian and that served as examples and advocates for her future self. Overall, her school environment was one of tolerance which allowed her to feel like she belonged. It was only during interactions outside of her school context that served as a source of frustration for her.

**Education as an escape route.** The participants were not happy in their school context. They used education as a way to escape their school situation. As a result, all four of the girls developed a strong student identity. Their families instilled in them the importance of education. The participants shared this value and recognized the important role education had in shaping their future lives. The investment in their high school served a different purpose. As they did not feel they belong in their school and had to fight ignorance on a daily basis, Spirit, Jordan, and Halsey wanted to graduate from high school as quickly as possible. Spirit and Jordan took extra courses for the past two years and sacrificed their family trips to the Middle East so they can graduate one year early from high school.

Hope, on the other hand, also valued her education; however, she cherished her high school experience. Hope spoke about high school fondly with nostalgia. This year, as a junior, Hope took her college entrance exams and she was excited for her college life but she was not in a hurry to end her high school one. She wanted to become a medical doctor and she was confident she was going to achieve her goal.

**Summary**

While the participants shared some similarities and differences on their identity construction journey, their individual experiences were unique to them. In conclusion, the data revealed the following major findings from the cross-case analysis: (1) participants constructed identities according to different factors or contexts such as geographical location and community; (2) participants constructed their identities based on the sociopolitical context and
this identity was influenced by the relationship they had with the media; (3) participants rejected stereotypes related to all aspects of their identity dimensions with the exception of gender expectations; (4) the decision to wear the hijab was a personal choice and the participants in this study were hesitant to put on the hijab because the hijab served as a physical marker of Islam and as a result women who wore the hijab faced discrimination from non-Muslims; (5) finally, participants constructed their identities based on messages they received from their school context.
The purpose of this study was to examine how second generation Palestinian American Muslim female adolescent students constructed their identities and specifically in the context of their school life. Four participants that identified as second generation Palestinian American Muslim female adolescent students were recruited to participate in the study. They participated in three rounds of interviews. The participants were also asked to collect three to five artifacts that represented their identity. Finally, the researcher visited each of the participant’s home schools and reviewed publicly available documents that provided the researcher with contextual background into the school life of the participants. The data collected was analyzed using narrative analysis. This chapter revisits the two research questions that guided this study and discusses the findings in light of current scholarship.

Identity Construction and Palestinian American Female Youth

The first question this study explored was how Palestinian Muslim female adolescents constructed their identities. The analysis highlights (1) the concept of saliency and context; (2) the role of public discourse and the role of social media in constructing identities and counter identities; (3) the importance of family and communities for affirming identities; (4) gender expectations in identity construction; and (5) the choice to wear the hijab as one of personal choice, discrimination, and responsibility. Below is a discussion of each finding and how it connects to the researcher literature.

Saliency and Context

The multifaceted nature of identity has been noted by other scholars (Ajayi, 2006; Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Bailey, 2000; Dinkha, Abdelhamid, & Adelhalim, 2008; Lee, 2003), including Jones and McEwen (2000). These studies also suggested
that different facets or identity options may become more or less salient depending on contextual factors (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000). Jones and McEwen (2000) defined saliency as “internal awareness and external scrutiny” (p. 410). This means that some aspects of one’s identity become more prominent than others depending on contextual factors. In the case of the four participants for this study changes in geographical context (i.e. moving, traveling between the United States and the Middle East) influenced how certain identities became more salient.

Migration (whether permanent or temporary) is not included in Jones and McEwen’s model. Other scholars have noted how identity options may shift as a result of moving to a new city and in the context of transnational individuals who continually negotiate their identities in different linguistic and cultural environments (Hermansen, 2000). Furthermore, in a research study conducted on Sudanese Australians, participants faced being ‘othered’ or discriminated against because of their racial, ethnic, and linguistic identification. While the participants identified as Sudanese Australians, they constantly had to defend their Australian identity (Hatoss, 2012). The participants always had to face the question “where are you from?” even though some of the participants lived in Australia for a decade or more (Hatoss, 2012, p. 48). In the case of this study, the participants also identified as American and whenever the participants felt they had to defend their Muslim and Palestinian identity their American one was automatically challenged.

Specifically, whenever the participants felt a piece of their identity was being challenged, that dimension of their identity became the most salient. As Jones and McEwen state, “systems of privilege and inequality were least visible and understood by those who are most privileged by these systems. Thus, when difference was experienced, identity was shaped” (2000, p. 410). This quote confirmed that whenever the participants in this study faced a challenge, their identity was
constructed. In this case, the participants felt their Palestinian identity was most salient when they faced struggles with the IDF in Palestine. Furthermore, this study showed that not only is geographical location an important factor of identity construction but so was the community within that geographical context.

The community in which the participants found themselves in also played a related role. Depending on the community, some identity dimensions were more salient than others. Moreover, one study of Hmong students also found that community played a critical role in the saliency of ethnic identity for second generation postsecondary Hmong students. In fact, the study found, “[t]heir strong sense of ethnic identification and community seems to have provided them with the stability and support they needed to make the changes necessary for their long-term survival without sacrificing their sense of self” (2013, p. 600).

**Seeking Affirmation in the Face of Negative Public Social Discourse**

An important variable in the participants’ identity construction was in reaction to the current sociopolitical context in the United States. The girls expressed their frustration about how Arabs were portrayed in American news outlets. All four of the girls felt that Arabs Muslims were represented in a negative light and they felt misunderstood. The participants in this study dealt with issues of racism due to their sociopolitical context. After the attacks on the World Trade Center, there were increased acts of racism towards Arabs (ADC, 2003; Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Nadal et al., 2012). In a study of media images related to the Muslim faith, Jackson (2010) also found that images of radical Muslims perpetuated a negative stereotype relating Muslims with terrorism. In response to these negative portrayals, the participants sought ways to counter stereotypes and find ways to positively affirm their identities through social media and strong familial relationships.
Media. The idea of media as a contextual factor was not mentioned in the original model; however, it was a feature that came out of the literature as well as the data and should be included. There is an aura of negativity surrounding Arabs in popular culture (Nadal et al., 2012; Wingfield & Karaman, 2000). For example, in Disney’s popular film Aladdin, Arabs are portrayed through images of caravan and donkey riders, Bedouins, harems, sheiks, and oil princes. Additionally, the main characters, the heroes, in Aladdin have European features and light skin which is not a fair portrayal of Arabs. Moreover, the bad guys in Aladdin were ones that possessed more stereotypical Arab features with olive skin, large noses, heavy accents, and thick body hair. Moreover, Arabs are typically cast as villains in movies and popular cartoons. For example, on Batman, a popular Saturday morning cartoon, Arabs were the “bad guys” armed with guns and plotting to take over the world (Wingfield & Karaman, 2000). These depictions perpetuate the negative stereotype about Arabs as violent and criminal. The authors posit “[e]thnic stereotypes are especially harmful in the absence of positive ethnic images” (Wingfield & Karaman, 2000). Stereotyping, acts of discrimination, and microaggressions portrayed in the media also have a large impact on how non-Arabs understand Arabs, which in turn influences how Arabs identify themselves. These images that go uncontested have a negative impact on Arab Muslim’s mental health (Nadal et al., 2012).

In Aoudé’s study, his participant Jay who identified himself as American first and Palestinian second, changed after September 11. He found himself reconnecting and finding reassurance with his cultural roots despite the discrimination he faced as a result (2001, p. 159). Conversely, after September 11, other individuals of Arab origin were afraid to identify themselves as Arabs due to its negative connotation as synonymous with the word “terrorist,” a connotation perpetuated by media outlets (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Witteborn, 2007).
Individuals in Witteborn’s study were careful not to disclose they were Palestinian; they felt safer identifying as Arab rather than Palestinian (2007). The Palestinians in the study admitted they only disclosed they were Palestinian for two specific reasons: (1) in a room filled with other Palestinians and Arabs; (2) to a knowledgeable person interested in understanding about Palestine. The participants in Witteborn’s study defined knowledgeable as “people who did not gain their knowledge about Palestine from mainstream U.S. TV and believed that Palestinians are ‘troublemakers’ and ‘terrorists’” (Witteborn, 2007, p. 566). This was also true for the Muslims who participated in Witteborn’s study as well. This is interesting because the “Arabs” were more afraid to say they were Arab than to say they were Arab American. They felt tagging American to the end of Arab gave them validation and served as a reminder to others that at least part of them was American. This was especially true after September 11.

However, not all of the 53 participants were willing to adopt the hyphenated identity of Arab American. Some of them felt it perpetuated this idea of “otherness” (Witteborn, 2007). They felt that if they were citizens of the United States they should be simply Americans without needing further qualifiers. Others felt pushed into identifying as Arab American to face the discrimination of non-Arabs towards Arabs. One participant who identified as American felt she had to describe herself as Arab American. She mentioned that people often use “Arab” synonymously with the word “terrorist” due to the widespread use of the term in the media. She recalled one incident where, in order to confront this discrimination from non-Arabs, she told them she was an Arab American and she reassured them she was not a terrorist (Witteborne, 2007).

Nevertheless, not all of the participants in Witteborn’s (2007) study felt the same way in the face of discrimination. The Egyptians in the study felt there was a positive connection with
being Egyptian in the United States. It denoted a rich culture and a history of the Pharaonic era and failed to carry with it the negative connotations they perceived the identification “Arab” did. This was also the same with the Lebanese participants. They felt identifying as Lebanese carried with it a tolerable connection with Phoenician civilization, and, therefore, they preferred being identified as Lebanese rather than Arab or Arab American. In the case of Egyptians and Lebanese participants, they felt the need to distance themselves from the word “Arab” as it carried with it a negative stereotype that they did not want to be associated with, and unlike for the case for Palestinians, they felt more comfortable using their more accurate cultural identity (Witteborn, 2007).

Similarly to Palestinian Americans, Iranian American adolescents carefully choose when sharing their identification label with others. For example, the students in another study conducted on the identification patterns of Iranian Americans found that when they told other American students they were Iranian American, the American students associated the Iranian Americans with what they heard in the media. Words such as bombs, Islam, ghetto, nuclear weapons, and desert land popped into the conversation as negative aspects of their identity (Daha, 2011). Therefore, the students carefully chose to share with others that they were Persian American, as they believed Persian related to the success of their people. Moreover, Daha states “Negative portrayals of Iranians in the media and current politics were discussed by 68% of the students as having crucial roles in their self-identification” (2011, p. 552).

On the other hand, Nadal et al. mentions the idea of exoticism, wherein through popular culture the religion of Islam is exoticized or deemed as something so completely foreign it becomes trendy (2012). For example, the participants have noted that famous celebrities have
recently converted to Islam. They also mention the use of religious garments being exploited for fashion (Nadal et al., 2012).

**Politics.** Finally, there is a political aspect involved with identifying as Palestinian (Ahed, 1988; Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Aoudé, 2001; Cook, 2003; Witteborn, 2007). Across the refugee literature, in interviews with family members, to some extent all of them expressed a desire to return home to their countries. The Vietnamese immigrant participants in Centrie’s (2004) study expressed a desire to return home “someday.” Some of the children expressed a connection to Vietnam through their parents and through their early experiences there. The children limited their return to a visit while others felt it was a horrible place. When Centrie asked one Vietnamese boy whether he would like to go back he answers, “No, I don’t ever plan to go back. All I can remember is that it was a terrible place” (2004, p. 227). The Latino groups studied in the Lopez (1999) and Valdes (2001) studies also point out the participants’ interest in returning to their homeland to visit or help family. The majority interviewed did not actually want to return permanently to their homeland. Vietnamese, Laotians, Hispanics, and Palestinians share a common theme of being refugees and feeling forced to come to live in the United States, which may explain this sense of longing for their homeland. These marginalized groups also have offspring that share mixed feelings in relation to returning to their homeland.

However, Aoudé (2001) complicates the meaning of Palestinian identity. One of the ways he does this is by attempting to differentiate between ethnic identity and national identity. He defined ethnic identity as “members of an ethnic group [who] recognize their common national origin and that they belong to a non-dominant culture” (Aoudé, 2001). He defined a national minority as a group that has a “strong attachment and sense of belonging to the country of origin” (Aoudé, 2001, p. 155). For example, some of the participants in his study were not born
in Palestine, they were not fully aware of politics in Palestine, they have never visited Palestine, and they have not gone through the checkpoints or daily skirmishes as one who has lived in Palestine. However, they speak Arabic, they follow Palestinian traditions, and they have Palestinian immigrant parents. Aoudé (2001) wonders if these participants are ethnic minorities and not national minorities due to the fact they have not shared in all the experiences others have gone through. He questions whether there is a difference between these two terms or if there is an overlap.

Similarly, the participants in Ahed’s (1988) study expressed a strong connection with returning to Palestine. However, she made the claim that the Palestinian population was different than other groups for the following reason:

Other refugees seem, in general, not to harbor a lingering attachment to their homelands to the extent that Palestinians do. The reason being that in Vietnam, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other countries from which large numbers of refugees have fled to the U.S., foreign occupation and alienation of land are not issues as they are for Palestinians…. There is a sense of something still to come that perpetuates the vision of a homeland and thus differentiates them from other immigrant Americans. For them being Palestinian is not just a nationality but it revolves around gaining an identity. (1995, p. 19)

Witteborn (2007) also complicated the idea of categorizing individuals in terms of ethnic or cultural identities. In previous scholarship, cultural identity denoted a sense of belonging to a larger group while ethnic identity referred to a cultural aggregate, which was defined by specific characteristics such as language, religion, and traditions. Witteborn noted “[c]onceptualizing ‘Arab American’ as an ethnic or cultural identity a priori highlights the linguistic, cognitive, and emotional otherness of people and does not address hybrid identities” (2007, p. 559). Witteborn agreed neither of these terms addressed the multitude of identity expressions of individuals such as an identification of a political nature. Therefore, Witteborn (2007) introduced the concept of the “collective identity.” This refers to how an individual identifies themselves as a member of a
group. This membership was based on social interactions amongst individuals. For example, “[b]y paying attention to the ways people express, refute, and affirm collective identities in particular locales, a researcher can explore the interpersonal and communal dimensions of identity talk without identifying people and groups as ethnic, cultural, or national…” (Witteborn, 2007, p. 559). The idea of collective identity took into account the intersection of multiple identities and membership in various groups simultaneously. By observing individuals of a group through a collective identity lens, researchers understood how individuals chose to identify themselves. Words such as “Arab” or “Muslim” automatically placed individuals in a box. It conjured up associations that may or may not be true for the individuals involved.

**Social media.** The participants in this study connected with alternative reports about the Palestinian context and with family through social media in an effort to seek positive portrayals of Palestinian Muslims in the media. Jensen (2003) also studied adolescent identity formation in a global world and she shared, “adolescent cultural identity formation also presents challenges that may be met by developing new skills, the kinds of skills necessary for a multicultural world, that allow adolescents to function well psychologically and to contribute to society” (p. 195). One skill that the participants in this study adopted as a way to function successfully in society was their use of social media. Therefore, the role social media played in identity construction for the participants in this study was that it provided them with alternate ways to stay connected to Palestine. More importantly, it provided the girls with affirmations of identity that were not present in the American media.

Other studies have also noted the role of social media to build discourses. Participants in a study by Aoudé (2001) similarly used technology to keep in close contact with Palestinian relatives across the globe. For example, another study found social media helped individuals to
find affirmation of their identity. Moreover, social media was also a motivator for individuals to take collective action (Kende, Van Zomeren, Ujhelyi, and Lantos, 2016). Students in late adolescence used social media for social affirmation use. Over time, the use of social media for social affirmation instilled a sense of agency or a belief that they can use social media for social change. Finally, social media motivated youth to take collective action (Kende et al., 2016).

Overall, social media served as a medium of social empowerment especially for marginalized groups such as youth and marginalized communities. On a global scale, social media sites provided an opportunity for citizens in 22 Middle Eastern countries to have a voice and take collective action against their government in what is known as the “Arab Spring” (Gire, 2012; Rennick, 2012).

**Familial relationships.** Another area where the participants sought affirmations of their identity was through their membership within their family context. All four of the participants had strong familial bonds. They spoke fondly throughout the interviews every time they referenced their family relationships. Moreover, for every participant, they all chose women within their family, either their mother or a sister, which represented a role model for them.

This is similar to other studies that have studied the important role family played in affirming cultural identities (Abu-Haj, 2007; Bosher, 2013). For example, in one study of Palestinian American youth in an American high school, it showed that disciplinary sanctions were used as a result of cultural misunderstandings and differences in “global politics” (Abu-Haj, 2007, p. 2). Through interviews, the youth expressed their anger and frustrations with being misunderstood within their school context. However, it was through their involvement with family that provided them with a positive sense of self. Haj stated,

The strong national and cultural connection to Palestine that all of the youth expressed was maintained and reinforced through the practices of everyday life in
the United States. As part of a close-knit community that was mostly related by
birth or marriage, these young people spent their in-school and out-of-school hours
in each other’s company, rarely interacting with peers or adults who were not
family members. (2007, p. 11)

This quote shows that in the face of the discrimination and racism the Palestinian youth faced,
the participants sought outlets that provided them with affirmations of identity through their
familial relationships similar to the findings of this dissertation.

Another study of second-generation Hmong students revealed that family played an
integral role in maintaining ethnic identity, academic success, and self-esteem (Bosher, 2013).
Bosher (2013) studied 101 students from nine postsecondary schools in the state of Minnesota
and Wisconsin. She found that these students adopted aspects of American culture as well as
aspects of Hmong culture and they self-identified as being Hmong. Bosher also found that once
the students entered college, they found their Hmong identity most salient based on their
interaction with other peers. They found they had different ideals than the other American
students on campus and they sought Hmong cultural organizations and other students that also
identified as Hmong on college campuses to affirm their Hmong identity. Bosher found, “the
strength of their families and the traditional culture with which they were raised ultimately
worked to their advantage. Rapid assimilation into American culture and the resulting
breakdown in ethnic culture might have resulted in less academic success” (Bosher, 2013, p.
600). This quote reveals that family was one contextual factor that contributed to the
maintenance of Hmong ethnic identity for these students as well as their overall academic
success. The Hmong students received positive affirmations of identity through their familial
relationships and this is in line with the results of this dissertation.

Finally, in a study of 217 Chinese-American and Chinese-Australian immigrants,
researchers sought to understand if parenting techniques influenced ethnic knowledge and ethnic
pride in first and second generation adolescents. The researchers found that parenting impacted the adolescents’ pride in their ethnic heritage (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992). In fact, “parenting practices contribute significantly to adolescents’ sense of pride and positive evaluation of their ethnic heritage” (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992, p. 19). This finding is related to the idea that family relationships, especially the relationships between parents and children, served as a contextual factor that greatly impacted the identity construction of adolescent children.

**Gender Expectations in Identity Construction**

Another theme that came as a result of the data was the impact gender expectations had on identity construction. All four of the participants were able to identify the different roles the males and females held within their family. Two of the four participants were aware of these differences but followed traditional gender roles. They also chose careers in female dominated fields as caretakers: nursing and teaching. The other two participants refused traditional gender roles and sought careers in the medical field as doctors and wanted to get married after they fulfilled their educational and career goals.

This finding was consistent with the research literature on Arab Americans and gender roles (Cainkar & Read, 2014). Arab immigrants maintain more traditional family lives and enforce traditional gender roles than that of American households as a way to transmit and maintain their ethnic, cultural, and religious identity (Cainkar & Read, 2014). Moreover, in Arab culture, the family is the most salient and the most important part of one’s identity. This may explain why the girls in the study recognized the inequality of gender differences in their household but allowed it to continue in their lives. The participants knew it was for the sake of maintaining a close bond with their family.

In another study of Palestinian women, the women in the family had the responsibility of upholding Palestinian culture and national ties. The women interviewed discussed the
importance of hanging Palestinian artifacts related to the occupation around the home. They also mentioned the need to preserve Palestinian traditions due to a sense of duty to uphold a feeling of nationalism within their children (Ahed, 1988). Besides hanging the artifacts, the women also instilled a sense of nationalism within their children through storytelling. The women shared personal stories as well as family stories about life under the occupation. They did this as a continual reminder of their Palestinian national identity. Additionally, for those Palestinians who were living in the Diaspora they must remember how they are lucky to be living outside a state of war, but remember to support family that is still living in the territories financially and through other means (Abu El-Haj, 2007).

**The Hijab: A Decision of Personal Choice and a Marker of Discrimination**

The data also revealed the important role the *hijab* played in identity construction for the participants in this study. Even though the participants did not wear the *hijab*, they made observations and took notice of the tensions surrounding the *hijab* in relation to friends and family members that did make the choice to wear the *hijab*. Moreover, all of the girls confessed having the intention to wear the *hijab* at one point in their life; it was just a matter of when. Additionally, while it was an expectation of their family that the girls wear the *hijab*, it was also a decision of personal choice. The participants realized through their observations that the *hijab* functioned as a target of discrimination. It was a physical marker and an announcement to the world of one’s religious affiliation as a Muslim female. The participant’s hesitancy and apprehension to wear the *hijab* was related to their understanding that it was a heavy choice and one that they had to be mentally prepared for due to the discrimination they would face in the Western world.

Other studies have also noted the role of the *hijab* in the identity construction of Muslim females. In a study of 12 Muslim women in North Carolina, it revealed that the practice of
wearing the *hijab* was one of personal choice. Moreover, the *hijab* functioned as a symbol of female empowerment according to the women. The women shared that once they made the personal decision to wear the *hijab* they felt empowered as a woman. The *hijab* was a message to others that they are the keepers over who has rights to their physical bodies. The *hijab* provided them with a positive body image because it eliminated the judgments people made about the appearance of women and it took away the societal pressure of women needing to prescribe to a specific ideal of beauty because everyone was the same while wearing the *hijab* (Al-Wazni, 2015). Also, all of the women held feminist ideologies. Moreover, the women were aware that the Western world looked at the *hijab* as a symbol of oppression and violence. Additionally, the subgroup within the Muslim faith that experienced the most discrimination was Muslim women who wore the *hijab* (Al-Wazni, 2015). Ironically, the women felt pressured in their decision to wear the *hijab* and were oppressed because of it from non-Muslims. The women cited discrimination from others after critical events such as 9/11 and the Boston bombing. One woman even made the conscious decision to take off the *hijab* after 9/11 because she felt unsafe. Others shared that once they wore the *hijab* they were denied their rights and passed over for promotions within their workplace (Al-Wazni, 2015). Other studies have also noted the discrimination Muslim women faced due to their decision to wear the *hijab* (Nadal et al., 2012). The women were referred to as terrorists and being related to Osama bin Laden (Nadal et al., 2012).

The participants in this dissertation study were also aware of the sociopolitical context in which they lived and they were starting to make connections about how the outside world would view them once they made the decision to wear the *hijab*. They were making observations about how women who were important to them were being treated as a result of their choice to wear
the hijab. While the participants viewed the hijab in a positive light and they were all committed to making the choice to wear the hijab, they were hesitant to make the decision to wear the hijab until they were ready because they knew it would make them a target of discrimination. They worried about how it would affect their daily lives and how it would affect how others see them in academic settings. Education and their student identity was important to these participants and they worried if they put on the hijab how that would impact how their teachers and peers would view them as well as how it would impact their future success. In the words of Halsey, “I think of everything that comes with it, and I'm not ready for it yet” (Halsey, personal communication, December 21, 2017).

Identity Construction within the School Context

The second research question explored how second generation Palestinian American Muslim female adolescent students constructed their identities in the context of their school life. Analysis of the data showed four critical findings: (1) school environment can make a significant positive difference in identity construction for Palestinian American adolescents; (2) various schooling practices can silence minority student identities; (3) participants resisted silencing and sought affirmation through extracurricular activities; (4) participants looked at education to escape a negative environment where they did not feel they belonged. Below is a discussion of each finding and how it connects to the researcher literature.

Impact of School Environment on Identity Construction

The school environment played an important role in the identity construction of students. The contrast between Hope’s experiences in an all-girl Islamic school and the experiences of the other three students in terms of a sense of security, affirmation, support, and advocacy was significant. Hope was a part of the dominant discourse at her school. In the case of the other
three participants, they felt silenced because they did not receive affirmations of their identity within their school context. Other studies have also shown similar findings.

In a study of nine Muslim women who attended single sex and co-educational school settings, the majority of the participants shared their appreciation of single sex schools for a number of reasons. First, single sex schools provided equal treatment of the sexes. Co-educational settings are criticized for providing preferential treatment towards boys (Hamdan, 2010). It was believed that males tend to dominate classroom discussions and interactions. Moreover, in coeducational school settings, men dominated senior positions at the school. There were few women role models in positions of power in comparison to single sex female schools. Finally, while there were low numbers of girls interested in STEM fields at single sex schools, the numbers are even lower in coeducational settings (Hamdan, 2010). Furthermore, women who were products of single sex schools benefited in social emotional ways as well. Women from single sex schools had higher self-esteem and self-confidence. Additionally, they performed well academically in post-secondary settings and they were career bound. Finally, women from single sex settings were prepared with the skill set to encounter leadership roles (Monaco & Gaier, 1992).

One study examined the influence student characteristics had on the effect of their single sex schooling experience. The researchers found that there were many factors that contributed to a positive or negative single sex schooling experience. However, one of the factors that was important to the success of single sex schools was school climate and connection to school. Students who felt safe and perceived they belonged at their school experienced high rates of academic success and they stayed in the school long term. Minority status also impacted student success. For example, if the majority of the students and staff shared the same ethnic, religious,
and or racial identity or identities, they were more likely to perform well in school and stay in attendance at that school. However, the opposite was also true. If a single sex school had a minority population in terms of ethnicity, religion, or racial identity, they tended not to feel connected to their school and they did not stay in attendance at the single sex school (Patterson & Pahlke, 2010).

Also, in a comparative study of Chinese complementary schools versus mainstream schools in Great Britain, researchers sought to understand the impact Chinese heritage schools had on the lives of Chinese adolescents. Researchers interviewed 60 students across 6 Chinese heritage schools and they found that the three major complaints students had about their school was related to teaching techniques, the physical space being subpar, and the lack of resources. However, the researchers confirmed that Chinese heritage schools actually provided more benefits than negatives for British Chinese adolescents. Furthermore,

The schools are not only important for students culturally, educationally, linguistically, or as providing ‘safe spaces’ from racism, but also provide learning spaces within which Chinese pupils could indulge their love of learning and escape from being narrowly positioned within dominant educational discourses. (Archer, Francis, & Mau, 2009, p. 494)

It was imperative for schools to address the sociopolitical context in which their students lived because it could directly influence what happens inside of the school context (Books, 2007). For example, Sue Books performed a study in area public schools in New York. Books (2007) found female Muslim students were the targets of discrimination since the September 11th attacks on the twin towers in New York. Other students called them names and pulled off their headscarves. As a result, one of the case study schools encouraged teachers to eliminate bullying in the hallways by drawing in media articles and guest speakers on the religion of Islam. As a result, students were better informed about their classmates and the entire school took the bullying of Muslim female students seriously. Due to the school’s responsive nature to the
bullying that occurred on their school campus, the students were able to be accepted and feel safe at school. Research also revealed that a negative school climate also impacted student self-esteem and overall psychological well-being (Bosher, 2013; Brown and Chu, 2012). These examples evidence the important role school environment played in the identity construction of students. In the context of the participants for this dissertation, three out of the four students failed to feel safe in the context of their school environment.

**School Practices and Silencing Minority Student Identities**

The participants in this study perceived to be marginalized through multiple school practices within their school context. The participants realized they were not a part of the dominant narrative of their school discourse. Dong and Dong (2013) posit,

> voicing is an essential problem of inequality in communication; that whether one is able to achieve his or her voice is often conditioned by pretextual factors that exist before and beyond communication, and is negotiated in the communicative process. Questions of voice are therefore always questions of power and inequality. (p. 163)

Similar to other marginalized groups, the participants in this study began to construct their identity in opposition to the dominant discourse that took place at their school (Ogbu, 2004). The absence of positive representation of their cultures and identities in the curriculum and a lack of a knowledge base and advocacy by teachers and administrators led to participants feeling silenced in school.

To begin, students in this study were silenced through their school curriculum. Other studies found a similar phenomenon. For example, a study in Michigan revealed that Arabs were inadequately represented through the world geography curriculum adoption in counties throughout the state (Wingfield & Karaman, 2000). The researchers found that the chapter used to discuss Arabs in their textbook adoption was dated. The chapter mentioned that Arabs were Bedouins that came from the Middle East. However, it failed to mention that today only 2% of
the world populations are Bedouins and that the Middle East is not a nation-state but rather a political construct created in order to differentiate Arab populated countries from other Asian countries. As a result of these curriculum choices, Arab students felt left out of school discussions because their culture was not validated and they were not portrayed accurately in the school curriculum.

Additionally, a study conducted on second generation Palestinian American high school youth revealed that teachers often used disciplinary sanctions such as detention, suspension, and expulsion when dealing with this population of students (Abu El Haj, 2007). Through interviews with the students, El Haj (2007) revealed a reason for their deviant acts was a result of anger for not being validated in the school curriculum. For example, one student explained that she was in detention for arguing with her history teacher. The student was upset about the fact that her high school history teacher failed to acknowledge Palestine when looking at a map of Asia. She was in disbelief that her teacher failed to acknowledge a place that she had spent the last seven years of her life. Likewise, Haj believed that, “[s]chools play an important role in the construction of the symbolic boundaries of the nation — in constructing who is and is not a member of the nation — and in the provision of resources with which immigrant youth learn to belong to and navigate their new society” (2007, p. 288). Haj’s research evidenced the important role school had in the identity development of second generation Palestinian Americans, particularly regarding school curriculum and curricular choices (Abu El Haj, 2007).

Moreover, multicultural education is meant to encourage teachers to teach with an understanding of a student’s cultural, social, and political reality (Nieto, 2004). However, Sonia Nieto (2004) has been critical in the fact that multiculturalism in American schools meant something different in practice. Multiculturalism in many schools within the United States meant
celebrating differences on the most basic level such as understanding the dress diverse people wear, the food they eat, and the countries they come from. This was similar to the reality for the participants in this study. Other studies of marginalized groups have also found that teachers lack the cultural, social and political reality to teach diverse students (Brown, 2017). Similarly, in a research study of second generation early adolescent Mexican students, the findings revealed that schools that valued multiculturalism and looked at the diversity of individual classrooms as a positive led to academic success. Conversely, a negative school climate including teachers with low expectations and negative attitudes toward minority children led to low academic success. The study also found that peer discrimination was also a factor in negative academic student outcomes for minority children because it pushed them further away from connecting with their school context (Brown and Chu, 2012).

Finally, in another study of 26 first and second generation Afghan and Iranian immigrant adolescents, acts of prejudice and discrimination impacted their expression of cultural identity. The students in the study shared stories of being discriminated against based on their physical, ethnic, and religious identities. The students were constantly being asked where they were from. The participants in the study who were in late adolescence reported being discriminated against at work in the form of casual and sarcastic jokes. The participants also expressed the prejudice they faced in airports (Khanlou, Koh, & Mill, 2008, p. 506).

School was also another context where prejudice and discrimination took place from teachers and students alike. The research shared that long-term perceptions of prejudice and discrimination led to health issues, low self-esteem, high stress, depression, and behavior problems. However, for the youth in this study, the results of prejudice and discrimination manifested in how they chose to express their identities. The participants decided not to disclose
their religious or cultural identity at school, work, or public settings in order to protect themselves from incidents of discrimination. As a result, they were silenced and one participant shared feeling like an “outcast” throughout her schooling experience (Khanlou, Koh, & Mill, 2008, p. 506). Regardless, the participants were proud of their ethnic and religious identities. They felt the prejudice and discrimination helped them develop a sense of resiliency and a restored and renewed sense of pride in their religious and ethnic identities. This was especially true for the second generation participants that have never even visited their homelands but identified as Afghani or Iranian (Khanlou et al., 2008).

**Affirmation through Extracurricular Activities**

The participants felt silenced during their school day; they sought other outlets for affirming their identities through extracurricular activities. Even though it was not a part of their core curriculum, the participants were able to find an outlet from the discrimination they faced during the school day through extracurricular activities, such as The Diversity Club, or *debka* club. These outlets allowed the participants to resist the silence they felt throughout their school day. The participants’ involvement in extracurricular activities allowed them to exercise the identities that were not valued in their school context. Extracurricular activities provided the students with opportunities to affirm their identities and this is a finding that was supported by other studies (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; O’Dell, Smith, & Born, 2016; Steck & Perry, 2016).

In a longitudinal study of 1,800 adolescents, data revealed involvement in extracurricular activities reduced the risk of dangerous behaviors performed by adolescents. Adolescents engaged in extracurricular activities were less likely to engage in drugs, alcohol, and truancy. Moreover, involvement in extracurricular activities increased the academic success of these adolescents and the students tended to be college bound and or career ready by the time they
reached their senior year in high school. Furthermore, the researchers found involvement in extracurricular activities provided students with an opportunity to develop healthy relationships with peers and adults outside of their familial relationships (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003).

Another study of 1,432 undergraduates and graduate students examined the impact extracurricular activities had on post-secondary college students. The researchers found the same results of previous research; however, this study took the research one step further. The researchers found that students involved in extracurricular activities on campus developed a sense of personal efficacy. Students felt they were an agent of change and they saw their personal involvement in extracurricular activities as an opportunity for change (O’Dell, Smith, & Born, 2016).

Similarly, in a study of a marginalized group-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) students-the study revealed that extracurricular organizations for LGBTQ students challenged school practices and attitudes that perpetuated anti-gay sentiments and a school environment of intolerance. Moreover, the clubs served as, “an island of safety” for LGBTQ students (Steck and Perry, 2016, p. 374); but, “within the wider school system students continued to face an unsafe and exclusionary learning environment that threatened their physical and emotional safety and jeopardized their academic success” (Steck and Perry, 2016, p. 374). The participants in this study also had a haven of safety through their involvement of extracurricular activities.

Overall, even though the participants from public high schools felt silenced in multiple ways through their school context, they also found ways to resist. One way the girls resisted was through their involvement in extracurricular activities. Their involvement in extracurricular
activities served as an outlet from the ignorance they faced throughout their school day. They were able to change the narrative of school by seeking positive affirmations of their identity through their involvement in extracurricular activities.

**Education as an Escape Route**

Education served as another route to resistance from the lack of belonging the participants felt through their school context. The participants from American public high schools were not recognized or validated within their school context. Spirit, Jordan, and Halsey chose to focus on their education as a means to escape. Two of the participants accelerated their education by graduating one year early to escape their school context. The participants constructed a strong student identity that they enacted in school. Although the participants in this study felt silenced throughout their core schooling, they performed well enough in school not to be noticed. The participants in this study essentially were invisible in plain sight. This finding differed with research on other ethnic groups that face non-inclusive school environments. Instead, the research showed that exclusionary practices often correlate with lack of self-esteem and low academic success (Bosher, 2013; Brown and Chu, 2012). However, for the participants in this study, in conjunction with the strong learner identity they developed, there were other factors at play such as having a strong collective and bicultural identity, solid family support, high educational attainment, and involvement in extracurricular activities that allowed them to be successful within their school context.

The participants possessed a strong collective identity or a strong sense of belonging to a particular group due to shared experiences despite the marginalization they faced in the media and their school context. In fact, participants in this study were able to maintain a solid collective identity because of their recognition and response to their lower status in society (Ogbu, 2004; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Furthermore, Ogbu (2004) states, “minorities usually develop some
strategies to deal with the demands that they behave and talk like dominant group members in
order to achieve self-betterment in situations controlled by members of the dominant group”
(2004, p. 6). The participants from American public high schools recognized that they were not a
part of the dominant discourse within their school context. Once they recognized this, they
resisted the dominant school discourse by remaining silent throughout their school day.
However, the participants created a strong student identity because as members of their family
unit they were taught that education was an important value. The participants in this study also
realized they needed education to better themselves and their standing in society so the
participants’ student identity became most salient in the context of their school life (Ogbu, 2004).

Additionally, the participants also possessed a solid bicultural identity. Even though
school was difficult for them, they were able to navigate between both cultures fairly easily.
Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) describe this as an alternating bicultural. An alternating
bicultural is an individual that possessed “bicultural competence” or was able to interact in
American and ethnic settings fairly easily. While the alternating bicultural may identify more
with their ethnic identity, they still recognized the importance of their American one. At times,
alternating bicultural adolescents felt pressured to behave like mainstream students. Regardless,
alternating bicultural adolescents looked at their hyphenated identity through a positive lens
(Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997).

Also, the strong connection the participants had with their families also contributed to
their academic success. All four of the participants came from strong and supportive family
backgrounds. The participants valued their membership within their family and they valued the
messages that were transmitted to them from their familial relationships. One such message was
the important role of education. Moreover, all four girls took pride in their Palestinian identity.
They were all aware of the political side of being Palestinian. The participants wanted to contribute to awareness about the Palestinian plight and another message they received from their family was to receive an education to help make social change for other Palestinians. The participants also had high educational attainment through their families. For example, all of the participants in this study had parents and siblings with a high school diploma. Moreover, they had parents or siblings that completed or are enrolled in institutions of higher education. These family members served as role models of academic success. The participants were also involved in extracurricular activities at their school that allowed them to affirm their identity at some capacity.

At the time of this study, research revealed that Arab Americans were more highly educated than the national average for Americans. For example, 41% of Arab Americans in general held a bachelor’s degree (36% of Arab American women held a bachelor’s degree) while only 24% of the American population held a bachelor’s degree (Cainkar & Read, 2014). However, in contrast to Spirit and Jordan’s vice principal and her speculation about education and marriage, research revealed that Arab American women used education as a way to delay marriage (Cainkar & Read, 2014).

**Palestinian American Adolescents and the Framework**

Overall, the discovery from this study was that the way second generation Palestinian American Muslim female adolescents constructed their identities inside and outside of their school context differed depending on multiple dimensions of identity and contextual factors they experienced. This study found that identity dimensions such as race, social class, gender, religion, nationality, student identity, and culture were most salient for the participants based on contextual factors such as geography, sociocultural conditions, discrimination, social media,
family support, advocacy, school environment, school practices, extracurricular activities, and education. Figure 6-1 below shows Abes et al. original framework.

Figure 6-1. Reconceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity.

In terms of this study, Abes et al. (2007) failed to take into account contextual factors such as the importance of migration as a contextual factor for the participants in this study as well as the impact the media had on identity construction for adolescents. First, the participants were sojourners. They traveled between the United States and the Middle East often. Their participation in multiple communities across the globe provided the girls with multiple identity options that were more or less salient depending on their community context. Moreover, the media played a role in typecasting Arabs and Muslims in the “terrorist” role and the participants rejected this stereotype by actively seeking positive portrayals of their ethnic and religious identity dimensions. They found positive portrayals through social media. Social media was also not accounted for in the model of multiple dimensions.
Also, one identity dimension that was left out of the model but was crucial and most salient for the participants in this study was a strong national and student identity. While at times, the participants felt detached from their homeland as evidenced with their discussion of differences between lifestyles, *Eid* traditions, and gender norms, whenever it came to their national, or Palestinian identity they were connected to Palestine. Additionally, the participants felt disconnected to their school context and they developed a strong student identity to combat the silencing and discrimination they felt within their school context.

I suggest a revised model to include factors that were absent in the original framework and that were important to understanding Palestinian female adolescents and other second generation marginalized groups living outside of their host country. Contextual factors such as geography, media, social media, and school environment played a role in impacting the identity construction of the participants in this study and the framework needs to be revised to include these features. Figure 6-2 shows the revised model as a direct result of this study.
Figure 6-2. Revised model of multiple dimensions of identity which includes national, student, and cultural identity dimensions and contextual influences such as geography, discrimination, social media, advocacy, school environment, school practices, extracurricular activities, and education that were missing in the current model. These dimensions and contextual factors need to be included in order to account for the experiences of the participants in this study and other second generation marginalized groups living within the United States.

Finally, in terms of the meaning-making filter of the model, the participants interpreted their experiences at a foundational level with the exception of gender differences. Spirit and Jordan had a transitional meaning-making process while Halsey and Hope were foundational in the way they made sense of gender differences. Spirit and Jordan had a transitional meaning-making process in discussing the gender differences through their life experiences (Abes et al., 2007). While they recognized and were able to identity instances where boys and girls in their family were treated differently, they did not actively seek action against those stereotypes. In fact, they were inconsistent in how they felt about those differences and in some instances they fell in line with those stereotypes for men and women. However, Halsey and Hope were the most transparent in sharing that they do not ascribe to traditional gender roles for their future self because of family experiences and stories told to
them through their parents. Halsey and Hope went through a foundational meaning-making process. They were not only aware of the differences but they reflected about those differences in connection to their own lives. They actively sought career goals that went against those norms as a way to break the stereotypes. Spirit was making observations and was aware of the differences between the two genders. This revealed that although Spirit said she was not bothered by the different ways she and her younger male sibling were treated, her identity as a woman was not as salient to her identity construction as other parts of her identity.

The participants were able to clearly see the intersecting relationships between context and perceptions of identity. They rejected the stereotypes the media portrayed about their religious and ethnic identities. Instead they actively sought positive portrayals of individuals that shared their same religious and ethnic identification. While this study confirmed some aspects of Abes et al.’s framework, there were aspects of the framework that needed to be revised in order to understand the experiences of second generation Palestinian American adolescent students.

**Summary**

This study sought to explore two research questions: (1) how do second generation Palestinian American Muslim female adolescents construct their identities, and (2) how do second generation Palestinian American Muslim female adolescent students construct their identities in the context of their school life. As a result of the data, a number of major findings were revealed. To answer the first research question, identity was multifaceted and some identity options available to the participants became more or less salient in response to changes in context due to contextual factors such as migration and movement. For the participants in this study, they moved bicoastal and national (within the United States). Moreover, affirmative identity options were sought out in response to negative portrayals and sociopolitical discourse in the United States. Affirmations of identity came via social media and familial relationships. The
participants were also aware of their gender identity. They were reflective of the cultural norms that recognized the differences between men and women and the preference Palestinian culture has for men over women. The participants were divided in how they made sense of these divisions. Half of the girls followed traditional gender roles while the other half actively sought ways to change their life trajectory in response to the gender differences they experienced within their family. The data also revealed the tension surrounding the choice to wear the hijab. While the participants in this study did not wear the hijab they were aware of the discrimination their friends and family faced as a result of their decision to wear the hijab. These prior experiences impacted their choice to wear the hijab. The participants’ hesitancy and apprehension stemmed from the lack of mental preparedness they needed in order to make the decision to wear the hijab.

For the second question, four findings came as a result of the data. To begin, school environment can make a significant positive difference. In the case of Hope, her experience at an all-girls Islamic school showed how she was connected to her school context in every aspect. Also, various schooling practices silenced minority student identities. The participants resisted silencing and sought affirmation within their school context through extracurricular activities. Finally, participants looked at education to escape a negative environment where they did not feel they belonged.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the study’s major findings. It also presents implications for scholars and educators as a result of the findings. Finally, the chapter concludes with considerations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The current research study has found the following findings:

1. Identity is fluid, dynamic, and multi-faceted and multiple identity options became available due to contextual factors, such as geography.

2. Identity options become more or less salient in response to changes in context due to migration or movement. Moreover, contextual factors such as geographical location and community influenced the saliency of identity dimensions such as ethnicity, religion, and gender. Geographical location was a contextual factor that was not considered in Abes et al.’s (2007) model but was an important piece for the participants in this study.

3. The participants rejected stereotypes related to all aspects of their identity dimensions with the exception of gender expectations. Half of the participants accepted traditional gender roles while the other half rejected them. The reason immigrant parents maintained and reinforced traditional gender roles was because it was a way to maintain their ethnic and religious identity.

4. The decision to wear the hijab was a personal choice. The participants in this study were hesitant and apprehensive to put on the hijab. A related factor for this hesitancy was the fact that the hijab was a physical marker of Islam and as a result women who wore the hijab faced discrimination from non-Muslims.

5. Affirmative identity options were sought out in response to negative portrayals and sociopolitical discourse in the United States through social media and familial relationships.

6. School environment made a significant impact on the identity construction of adolescents.

7. Various schooling practices silenced minority student identities.

8. Participants resisted silencing and sought affirmation through extracurricular activities.

9. Participants looked at education to escape a negative environment where they did not feel they belonged.
Implications for Scholars

As a result of this study, one implication for scholars that was important to consider was preparing teachers to be culturally responsive. To begin, teacher preparedness programs have the responsibility for preparing future educators to be culturally responsive. However, the participants in this study struggled with connecting to staff members that were understanding of their cultural background. The participants in this study, with the exception of Hope, found it easier to stay quiet whenever their identities were being challenged within classroom discussions. They desperately sought teacher and student advocates but struggled to find people outside of their ethnic and religious identities who supported them. Even the year Hope spent in an American middle school, she noted that the students in her class were ignorant about cultures and traditions outside of the way they were brought up. She was not upset at them for it but she was discouraged because she struggled to find others that she connected with and who affirmed her identity. Therefore, the participants assumed the teachers were aware of sociopolitical events happening around the world that affected their lives and they were discouraged that it was not mentioned inside of their school context such as the social studies classroom. Therefore, teacher preparation programs need to emphasize the importance of equipping teachers with the tools necessary to teach within a 21st century world (Bransford, Hammond, & LePage, 2005). The student population within the United States is increasingly heterogeneous and the teacher workforce is homogenous (white, female, and middle class; Bransford, Hammond, & LePage, 2005). As a result, there fails to be a presence of diverse role models for culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students on K-12 campuses. Teacher preparation programs need to provide experiences for teachers to understand the CLD students within their classrooms.
**Implications for Educators**

As mentioned earlier, Sonia Nieto (2002) defined culture as a set of shared beliefs, attitudes, values, social practices, and or experiences that are influenced by historical, social, political, and economic factors that make up a group of people. Therefore, school culture could play a great role in understanding the plight of students within American public schools. There is a “hidden message” that could be conveyed as a result of the culture of a school (Kozol, 1991). Messages could be conveyed through the simplest mediums such as the posters on the wall or as grand as the teaching force hired to work with children. In the schooling context of the participants for this study, they all received negative messages about their sense of self from their experiences in American public schools. As a result, the students decided to accelerate their education and escape their school context. Moreover, the two most important factors that kept reoccurring through the individual narratives was the lack of connecting student home lives to their school context and affirming student identities throughout the school day. A discussion of these two factors follows.

**Connecting Home and School Lives**

Another implication for educators was the importance of connecting a student’s home context with their school context. All four of the participants had strong familial relationships. The participants looked to these relationships as ways to reinforce and affirm how they identified, especially in the face of the racism and discrimination they felt at school. The girls shielded themselves from the messages they received from the administrators, teachers, and members of their student body as a way of coping. The girls admitted that their lifestyle did not match the context of their school life. Therefore, schools need to do a better job at connecting the student’s home context with their school context. While the participants found outlets through
their involvement in extracurricular activities, schools need to find ways to embed this affirmation of identity throughout the school day.

**Affirming Student Identities at School**

Another implication for educators to consider as a result of the findings from this study was the importance of affirming student identities within the context of school. School served as a prime space where the participants received messages about who they are or how they were seen in society. Therefore, providing positive spaces for students to connect with others is crucial. Below is a discussion of ways educators can affirm student identities within the context of school through extracurricular activities, school curriculum, and advocacy.

**Extracurricular activities.** Based on the narratives of the four girls, the participants constructed their identity in the face of racism in and outside of the school context. The participants managed to find avenues to help them construct and affirm their identities through extracurricular activities. Therefore, in the face of this discrimination, it is encouraged for educators to create safe spaces wherein students of similar ethnic and racial backgrounds can get together to discuss the racist environment in which they live (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Baskin et al., 2010; Tatum, 1997). In *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, Tatum (1997) emphasized the need for students of the same racial and or ethnic background to gather together and de-stress from the discrimination they face on a daily basis. Creating support groups was a healthy way for students to console one another and discuss issues relevant to their situation (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Tatum, 1997). For example, Spirit and Jordan both found solace in the Diversity Club. Even though Spirit and Jordan had to meet off campus, get a sponsor outside of school, and manage to get a ride two times a week for practices, they found a space where they could affirm their ethnic identity. They were empowered by the interaction and connection they felt with the traditional dances they performed at universities all over Illinois.
Validation through the school curriculum. Another implication from this study was the importance of validating student identities through the school curriculum. Jordan and Halsey wished they were given the opportunity to learn about the history of their ancestors. Jordan went on to question whose history she was studying. She said she did not like the fact that she was not introduced to the history of her peoples but she stayed engaged because she had to meet her overall goal of receiving a college-ready high school diploma in order to graduate early.

Advocacy. Another implication for educators was the importance of advocating for marginalized groups within school. It was imperative that teachers were aware of the sociopolitical context in which they teach and how this influenced identity construction for adolescents. For example, the day after President Trump declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel, the participants were surprised at the support they received from staff and students who wore the hutta. However, the three participants who attended public high schools were also angry because the show of support on campus was limited to one day. Spirit wondered why her teachers did not advocate for her when discussions about Arabs and Muslims were happening in class and negative stereotypes were used to describe Arabs and Muslims. Jordan wondered where her administrators were when a fellow student paraded a confederate flag in the parking lot the day after President Trump’s declaration. Finally, Halsey wondered why she was sent to the principal’s office for advocating for her religious identity when she told a fellow student to stop calling Muslims terrorists.

Considerations for Future Research

As a direct result of this study, there were a number of considerations for future research. First, the family educational levels of the participants differed and this had an influence over discussions at home. I wondered if the family educational levels had an impact over how the participants constructed their identity overall. Moreover, the concept of the hijab was brought up
in multiple conversations. The girls in this study did not wear the hijab. It would be interesting to study youth who made the decision to wear the hijab and the impact that had over their identity construction. Furthermore, the students had to navigate their multiple identity options such as being American and Palestinian simultaneously. While the participants identified as American, there were times where society failed to accept them as Americans due to their ethnic and religious identifications. Finally, another area for future research is the long-term impact accelerating one’s education has on their social and emotional well-being as well as the correlation it has, if any, with traditional gender roles in Arab-American culture. Each consideration is discussed further below.

**Hijab and its Influence on Identity Construction**

Another consideration for future research was understanding the influence the hijab had on the identity development of young female adolescents. The girls in this study did not wear the hijab; however, the idea of the hijab was brought up in multiple discussions. The girls talked about parents, sisters, aunts, grandmothers, and friends who wore the hijab and how that changed the life of their family and friends. All of the girls shared that their families made it clear the decision to wear the hijab was a personal one but it was also clear to the participants that it was also a serious one and one not to take lightly because once they decided to wear it, it was not accepted to take it off. The girls all looked to the hijab as a positive marker of their religious identity. They were also aware of the struggles their family and friends went through once they made the decision to wear the hijab. Therefore, as a future research consideration, it is important to understand the experiences of young girls that do wear the hijab and the impact it has over their identity construction inside and outside of their school contexts.
**Biculturalism**

The participants in this study were considered white in some contexts of their lives while in others their identification differed based on their ethnic or religious identities. Therefore, more research needs to be conducted on students that are bicultural and attending American public schools. The students were looked at as “enemies within” (Abu El-Haj, 2007, p. 287) because while they were considered Americans, they were also included in terms like “terrorist” or “radical” whenever Muslims or Arabs were mentioned in the media or school discussions. Halsey agreed with her principal that her school does a great job at identifying international students and placing them in tracks that were appropriate for their language use; however, there failed to be supports for the students that looked white and “speak” white but do not always identify as white (Haddad, 2004).

**Education as an Escape Route and College Years**

All of the girls valued their education. Two of the girls chose to accelerate their education as a way to escape their difficult school contexts by graduating high school one year early. Therefore, another avenue for future research is following these girls through college. I wonder how their college experiences compares to their high school experience. I also wonder if the girls continued to stay engaged in their academics and if they made it to graduation. Moreover, all four of the participants referenced the gender differences within their families. Therefore, I wonder how this fares with their college experience and future goals of getting married and starting a family.
APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 1

Childhood

1) Can you tell me about a favorite memory you have when you were really young? Can you tell me about a least favorite memory you have when you were really young?

2) Can you tell me about a time when you were young that you felt things were not fair?

Family

3) Can you tell me what was it like growing up in your home?

4) If I interviewed your family about you, what would they say? Teacher? Friends?

5) Can you tell me about the worst argument you have ever had with a family member?
   Someone at school? How did you resolve it?

6) If you had to interview your grandparents, what kinds of questions would you ask them about their homeland?

Religion

7) Can you share your favorite memory of Eid?

School

8) Can you tell me about your elementary school experience?

9) Tell me about your friends in elementary school.

10) If I found your elementary school time capsule, what kinds of artifacts would I find in there? Why? Explain.

11) Is there anything you want to tell me to help me understand you better?
APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2

School

1) Tell me about your experience in an American high school.

2) Tell me about your friends in school.

3) Tell me about your favorite subject in school. Tell me about your least favorite subject in school.

4) Tell me about a time at school where you felt things were not fair.

Family

5) Tell me about your home life.

Personal

6) Who do you respect? Why?

7) How do you self-identify?

Sociopolitical Context

8) Sometimes in the news, people talk about Arabs and Muslims, what do you think about what is happening in the news today? What does your family think about the politics of today?
APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 3

1) If you had to write a sentence under your yearbook picture about your future, what would you say? Why do you say that? Why do you think that?

2) What do you think others would say about you? Parents? Friends? Teachers?

3) What can you learn about your future self?

4) Do you foresee any challenges in who you want to become? Why?
APPENDIX D
ARTIFACT ELICITATION PROTOCOL

Please gather artifacts such as photographs or objects that represent who you are.

Please gather 3 to 5 artifacts over a one week period. Once you gather all your artifacts, in writing, create a hashtag caption for each one of your artifacts. You will be asked to explain your hashtags and discuss why you chose to bring each of your artifacts during the second interview session. You will also be asked a series of questions related to your artifacts during the second interview session. Below are the questions we will discuss using the artifacts you gathered during the second interview.

1) Tell me about your artifact. Explain your hashtag.
2) Why is this artifact important to you?
3) Which artifact is your favorite? Why?
Hello,

My name is Zane Hasan and I am a student at the University of Florida. I am trying to learn about the multiple identities of second generation Palestinian American Muslim female adolescents. I will be working with four high school students. Additionally, the study seeks to understand how this group constructs their identity in the context of their school life. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to be a part of three interview sessions. Each interview will last for approximately 60 to 90 minutes and the interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The interview questions center around identity and school. Additionally, you will be asked to gather three to five artifacts that relate to your identity. During the second interview session, you will be asked to explain your artifacts as it relates to your identity. Finally, during the third interview, you will be asked about publicly available school documents such as the school dress code, school newspaper, school yearbook, and other documents in relation to your identity in the context of school life. During the interview sessions, you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. There are no known risks to participating in this study. You do not have to be in this study if you don’t want to and you can quit the study at any time. Other than the researchers, no one will know your answers, including your teachers or your classmates. If you don’t like a question, you don’t have to answer it and, if you ask, your answers will not be used in the study. I also want you to know that whatever you decide, this will not affect your grades in class. Your parent said it would be OK for you to participate. Would you be willing to participate in this study?
Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a graduate student in the department of education at the University of Florida, conducting research on the multiple identities of second generation Palestinian American Muslim female adolescents under the supervision of Dr. Ester De Jong. The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge about how second generation Palestinian Muslim American female adolescents describe and construct their identities. Additionally, the study seeks to understand how this group constructs their identity in the context of their school life. The results of the study may help this group in the context of school and it seeks to contribute to the larger body of research on multiple identities. These results may not directly help your child today, but may benefit future students. With your permission, I would like to ask your child to volunteer for this research.

All of the participants will be asked to be a part of three interview sessions. Each interview will last for approximately 60 to 90 minutes each and the interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The interview questions center around identity and school. Additionally, the participants will be asked to gather three to five artifacts that represent their identity. During the second interview session, the participants will be asked to explain their artifacts as it relates to their identity. Finally, during the third interview, all the participants will be asked about publicly...
available school documents such as the school dress code, school newspaper, school yearbook, and other documents in relation to their identity in the context of school life. During the interview sessions, the participants do not have to answer any question they do not wish to answer. The data collected from the interviews will be accessible only to the research team (me, my advisor, and a colleague) for verification purposes. At the end of the study, the recorded interviews will be erased and the transcripts will only be used for the study. The identity of the participants will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. The principal investigator or myself will replace their names with pseudonyms or fake names. Results will only be reported in the form of group data. Participation or non-participation in this study will not affect the children’s grades or placement in any programs.

You and your child have the right to withdraw consent for your child’s participation at any time without consequence. There are no known risks or immediate benefits to the participants. No compensation is offered for participation. The results of this study will be available in May 2018 upon request. If you have any questions about this research protocol, please contact me at 352-213-4407 (zana@ufl.edu) or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Ester De Jong, at 352-273-4227 (edejong@coe.ufl.edu). Questions or concerns about your child’s rights as research participant may be directed to the IRB02 office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611, (352) 392-0433.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Zane Talal Hasan

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily give my consent for my child, ________________, to participate in Zane Talal Hasan’s study on the multiple identities of second generation Palestinian American Muslim female adolescents. I have received a copy of this description.

________________________________________  _______________________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature                          Date

________________________________________  _______________________________________
Participant Signature (18 years or older)           Date
LIST OF REFERENCES


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Zane Talal Hasan was born in Jerusalem, Palestine the fifth of nine children. Her parents immigrated to the United States and settled in the state of Florida. Zane attended a large public high school in Florida where she graduated as top ten percent of her high school class. She was accepted to the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. In addition she received the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship to attend a top research one institution. While at the University of Florida, Zane majored in English Language and Literature with a specialization in advanced writing. She also triple minored in Arabic Language and Literature, Teaching English to Second Language Learners, and Secondary Education. After only three years, Zane completed her undergraduate education. During her undergraduate years, Zane was on the dean’s list throughout her academic career. She was also invited to be a part of a dozen honor organizations but she chose to accept membership with Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society and Golden Key Honor Society where she was actively involved. She was also involved in the Arabic Cultural Association at the university and she was elected as the vice president and president her junior and senior years. During her senior year of undergraduate work, she also received a scholarship to study abroad in Fez, Morocco under the mentorship of Dr. Aida Bamia. During her studies abroad, Zane continued to take Arabic Language classes. She also took classes to learn the local dialect in Morocco, which is called Maghrebi. During her study abroad, she taught locals English. That experience kindled Zane’s passion for teaching and learning language and upon her return she applied and was accepted into the University of Florida’s ProTeach Master of education graduate program.

Consequently, she graduated with her master’s in English education with a specialization and state endorsement in teaching English to second language learners in 2006. She also took classes to obtain her state endorsement in reading. During her master’s work, Zane also worked
towards teacher certification in the state of Florida, which she received upon graduation. Zane also holds a master of arts in educational leadership with a focus on principal preparation from Concordia University Chicago. Zane worked for four years as a language arts and reading middle school teacher. During this time, she also taught night English classes to university students at the University of Florida’s English Language Institute. She also taught reading courses to returning students at Santa Fe Community College. Zane has also taught ESL methods courses as an adjunct faculty member at Concordia University Chicago. Finally, Zane has also taught as an ESL resource teacher for five years at the elementary school level. Zane also completed her principal internship at the elementary school level as well.

After Zane’s work experience, she decided to return to school and work towards her doctorate in education. Zane thought she could make more of a ripple effect and inspire a greater amount of students by obtaining her doctorate and working in administration or in a university setting. In 2007, Zane was admitted into the college of education’s ESOL/ bilingual education program wherein she worked closely with her dedicated mentors, Dr. Candace Harper and Dr. Ester De Jong.

Throughout her years as a graduate student she was awarded the opportunity of working as a teaching assistant as well as a research assistant. She worked as a teaching assistant under Dr. Harper’s supervision wherein she aided in teaching master level students methods of ESL instruction. She also supervised master level students in the college of education’s ProTeach program. Zane also worked as a research assistant under the guardianship of Drs. Harper, De Jong, and Coady with project DELTA. Through those experiences, Zane gained valuable insight and knowledge into the world of academia. Through her coursework, Zane was also granted the opportunity to work with other faculty whom she was inspired by.
Throughout her graduate career, Zane was also recognized via prestigious awards and acknowledgments. She was nominated for the Lester Clemmons Awards for outstanding dedication to the field of education. She was also granted the opportunity to work with three other outstanding colleagues in revision and publication of the Florida Reading Initiative to include a section related to reading strategies for English Language Learners. Currently she is also a board member of SCIRA (Suburban Council of the Illinois Reading Association).