

2013-01-01

Arab Muslim Immigrant Women's Experiences of Living in the United States: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

Maissa Khatib

University of Texas at El Paso, mkhatib@utep.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd



Part of the [Public Health Education and Promotion Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Khatib, Maissa, "Arab Muslim Immigrant Women's Experiences of Living in the United States: A Qualitative Descriptive Study" (2013). *Open Access Theses & Dissertations*. 1654.
https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd/1654

This is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.

ARAB MUSLIM WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES OF LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES: A
DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY

MAISSA KHATIB

Interdisciplinary Health Sciences

APPROVED:

Leslie Robbins, Ph.D., Chair

Elias Provencio-Vasquez, Ph.D.

Irasema Coronado, Ph.D.

Eva Moya, Ph.D.

Benjamin C. Flores, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

Copyright ©

By

Maissa Khatib
All Rights Reserved

2013

DEDICATION

To my wonderful family:

I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful family who stood by me and supported me
unconditionally throughout this process.

ARAB MUSLIM WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES: A
QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

By

MAISSA KHATIB, B.A., M.A.

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Interdisciplinary Health Sciences

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

December 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my husband, Tarek Azzam. He empowered and encouraged me to complete my doctorate. Without his support, love, care and patience, reaching this academic level would have been impossible. I would also like to thank my daughter, Dima Azzam, and son, Fadl Azzam. The tremendous support and understanding they extended had a great impact on the pursuit of this project.

I also want to take this time to grant a much-deserved thank you to my dear parents, Moyassar and Hussein, for always believing in me, instilling in me the values of perseverance and hard work, and for teaching me that I can accomplish whatever I set my mind to. Also, I lovingly thank my siblings and mainly my sisters Lily and Lana, who are a source of wisdom and solace when the challenges of life become too overwhelming for me to endure.

I would like to thank Dr. Robbins, my mentor, who advised and guided me throughout my research and completion of my dissertation. Her assistance with the organization and editing of my work was of immense importance. I would like to thank all of my present committee members: Dr. Provencio-Vasquez, Dr. Coronado, and Dr. Moya of the University of Texas at El Paso. Their advice, support, guidance, and time to review my dissertation were of great help. I also wish to express my special thanks to Dr. Diane Monsivais, for her continuous support and encouragement during my doctoral journey. Last, but not least, I am grateful to my colleagues in the department of languages and linguistics, Ms. Luzma Garcia and Dr. Jane Evans, for their love, encouragement, and support.

There are many people that have directly or indirectly helped me in this research project; I'm grateful for their invaluable suggestions that helped shape my dissertation. I give special

thanks to Ms. Sausan Masoud, Mr. Jose Estrada, the Islamic Center of El Paso, Middle Eastern Ladies' Society, and The Southern Federation of Syrian Lebanese American Clubs.

Finally, I am thankful for the wonderful Arab Muslim women who allowed me to enter their lives. I am thankful for their trust and support to accomplish this project.

ABSTRACT

Background: Over three million Arab Muslims live in the United States, and more than half are women (Nasser-McMillan, 2003). Little is known about these women in the growing and diverse Arab American Muslim population, and there is limited information available regarding their experiences of living in the U.S. Their experiences influence multiple aspects of their lives, including functioning in mainstream culture, use of resources or agencies, and the decisions they make that shape their acculturation outcome.

Purpose: To describe the experiences of Arab Muslim immigrant women living in the U.S.

Methods: This qualitative study examined the shared experiences of immigrant Arab Muslim women in the U.S. In-depth, semi-structured interviews lasting 1-2 hours with Arab Muslim immigrant women were conducted. Data analysis was iterative, beginning with data collection and continuing through the entire analysis period. Data rigor was established through a clear audit trail and debriefing sessions with other qualitative researchers.

Findings: Fifteen Arab Muslim women were interviewed. Themes were identified through qualitative thematic data analysis and categorized into the following main areas: (1) Coping and embracing the good, (2) Hybrid positionality, (3) Safety through invisibility, (4) Spiritual growth and family bonding, and (5) Fear of the unknown future. The main themes were viewed through the lens of John Berry's acculturation model and social cognitive theory.

Conclusion: Qualitative descriptions of Arab Muslim immigrant women living in the United States reflect influences that affect functioning in the mainstream culture, use of resources or agencies, and decisions they make that shape their acculturation outcomes. If these influences are not explored and recognized, they may interfere with adjustment to living in the U.S.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
STUDY PROPOSAL	1
Aims of the Study	1
Background and Significance	2
Defining the Population: Arab Muslim Immigrant Women	2
Arab Immigration	6
Arab Muslim Immigrants	7
Arab Muslim Culture	8
Collectivism	8
Gender	9
Islam as a Way of Life	9
Relevant Studies	14
Definition of Terms	18
Innovation	19
APPROACH	20
Study Design	20
Sample	20
Data Collection	21
Data Analysis	21
Rigor and Trustworthiness	23

PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS.....	25
Human Subjects Involvement	25
Potential Risks.....	26
Precautions to Mitigate Risks	26
Benefits to Participants.....	27
Data Collection.....	27
Observations.....	28
Interviews	29
Setting and Procedure.....	29
Article 1	30
Introduction	31
Theoretical Framework	33
Acculturation and Berry's Acculturation Model	33
Social Cognitive Theory	35
Methods	36
Study Design.....	36
Participants	37
Data Analysis	40
Findings.....	41
Emergent Themes.....	43
Coping and Embracing the Good	43
Hybrid Positionality.....	49
Safety Through Invisibility.....	52
Spiritual Growth and Family Bonding	56
Fear of the Future	58

Discussion	60
Complex Acculturation Experience.....	61
Limitations	63
Summary	63
Article 2	65
ABSTRACT.....	66
Accessibility and Participation.....	70
Data Collection.....	71
Interviews	74
Relationship Between the Researcher and the Participants	74
Summary	76
REFERENCES.....	77
APPENDICES	87
Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter.....	87
Appendix B: Research Proposal.....	89
Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer	96
Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer (Arabic Version).....	97
Appendix E: Informed Consent Form.....	98
Appendix F: Informed Consent Form (Arabic Version).....	102
Appendix G: Demographic Questionnaire	107
Appendix H: Demographic Questionnaire (Arabic Version).....	109
Appendix I: Interview Guide.....	111
VITA.....	112

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Individual Profiles of Participants	39
--	----

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Acculturative Stress Model (Berry et al., 1987).....	34
Figure 2. Berry’s Acculturation Model (Berry, 1980).....	35
Figure 3. Arab Muslim women’s life journeys in the United States.	42

STUDY PROPOSAL

Aims of the Study

Over three million Arab Muslims live in the United States, more than half of which are women (Nasser-McMillan, 2003). Little is known about these women in the growing and diverse Arab American Muslim population, and there is limited information available about their experiences of living in the U.S. These experiences influence multiple aspects of their lives, and the limited information available therefore creates barriers to working with this population. Research is needed to establish a clearer understanding of how these women experience their transition to living in the U.S. in order to increase the knowledge and understanding of Arab Muslim women's needs in relation to functioning in the mainstream culture, use of resources or agencies, and the decisions they make that shape their acculturation outcome.

One method of determining these experiences is through obtaining descriptions of living in the U.S. by entering the world of the individual and drawing meaning from the view point of the participant (McConnell-Henry, 2005). A qualitative descriptive research design will be the most appropriate approach to answer the research question of this study. The results of this study may increase cultural sensitivity of health care providers interacting with this population. Therefore, the aim of this qualitative descriptive study is to improve the understanding of the experiences of Arab Muslim women living in the El Paso, Texas area of the U.S. The research question is: "What are the experiences of Arab Muslim women living in the U.S.?"

Background and Significance

Over three million Arab Muslims live in the United States, and more than half of this number is comprised of women (Nasser-McMillan, 2003). This particular population is underrepresented and sometimes appears to be invisible. Little is known about these women in the growing and diverse Arab American Muslim population, and there is limited information available regarding their experiences of living in the U.S. Research is needed to design culturally-sensitive interventions related to functioning in the mainstream culture, use of resources and agencies, and decisions related to acculturation outcomes.

Defining the Population: Arab Muslim Immigrant Women

The term “Arab” is a classification based largely on common language (Arabic) and a shared sense of geographic, historical, and cultural identity. The total population of the Arab world is approximately 300 million across in 22 nations (Arab American Institute Foundation [AAIF], 2002). Despite the national borders arbitrarily drawn between Arab countries in the post-colonial period, this population continues to view themselves as a unified entity, regardless of current political and geographical separation. “Despite this diversity, Arab Americans feel connected through common values and cultural heritage which give them their shared identity” (Arab American National Museum, 2011).

Arab Americans are Arabic-speaking individuals who were born in an Arab country and immigrated to the U.S., or whose parents were born in an Arab country and who therefore consider themselves of Arabic origin (American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 2002). Arab Americans are heterogeneous, but share similar cultural backgrounds based on their linguistic and geographic commonalities. They constitute a population that has been growing in the past years.

According to the Arab American Institute Foundation, there are four million Arab Americans and Muslims that comprise 25-30% of the Arab American community today (2008). During the 1960s, there was an influx of Arab families immigrating to the U.S. (Kayyali, 2006). Due to this occurrence, the number of Arab women in the U.S. increased to a 1.12/1 male to female ratio (Arab American Yearbook, 2008). There are many misconceptions regarding this population; for example, some believe that Arab Muslims come from the Middle East, including non-Arab countries like Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey. Another example is that many people perceive Muslims as one homogenous group that is conservative and traditional. In order to understand the background of the participants in this study, it is essential to provide a background of Arab Muslim American women.

Arab Muslim women come from a diverse religious and ethnic group. A significant number of these women are secular, others traditional, and some practice Islam in their homes. Their life styles and practices vary depending on how they identify themselves (Arab, Muslim, Arab American, Muslim American, or American), their integration process, and their political views. Arab Muslim women in the U.S. share commonalties and differences in their daily lives and belief systems. Little is known about women in the growing and diverse Arab American Muslim population, and there is little information available about the experiences of Arab Muslim women after emigrating from their native countries.

There are various factors shaping the lives of Arab Muslim women in the U.S. First, the American international policy and its involvement in the Middle East have largely impacted the American media, thus producing a negative representation of Arab/Muslim Americans. In addition, since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq have been intensifying explicit and implicit negative images and perceptions of Arabs and Muslims.

Second, there is a strong and complex relationship between immigration and health. Moving from one place to another place embodies challenges and difficulties that affect immigrants in numerous areas, including financially, physiologically, and psychologically. Immigration can affect life and health on every level. According to Lipson (1983), immigration can affect one's life and health on every level. He stated: "migration affects health directly at the biological level via dietary changes, differences in local pathogens, lack of appropriate immunity, and through the risk of accidents in new situations" (p. 857).

Third, migration is a difficult process and can be a very stress-inducing experience. It can lead to various social and mental health issues ranging from social isolation and adjustment limitations to depression and anxiety (Norris & Inglehart, 2012). The psychological effects of migration are immense. For instance, the process of acculturation can lead to either positive or negative outcomes. When positive psychological adaptation occurs, the acculturating individual develops a clear identity, strong sense of self-esteem, and positive mental health image. Negative adaptation leads to anomie, identity confusion, and anxiety (Amer & Hovey, 2007).

The U.S. has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the world, and minority groups comprise an increasing portion of its population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Each year, thousands of individuals migrate from a source or home country to a host country for a variety of reasons, such as political instability, high unemployment rates, family reunification, or the opportunity to study abroad at an institution of higher education. Arabs immigrate to the U.S. for the same reasons. This population is not a new minority in this country. Arab immigration to the U.S. began almost a century ago. There were several waves of Arab immigration to the U.S., which are discussed later in this section.

Although some minority groups have been extensively represented in research, the representation of Arab Muslims in studies has been minimal. Arab Muslim immigrants are one group within the Muslim population that are underrepresented and sometimes appear to be invisible. There is a scarcity of research addressing the needs of Arab Muslim women in the U.S. or that examines their immigration experiences through expressing and discussing their experiences.

Not all Arabs are Muslims and not all Muslims are Arabs. Millions of Americans are Arab Muslims; some are first generation immigrants to the U.S. who considered the country to be a land of opportunity and freedom, while others were born in the country as second or third generation children of immigrants.

There is inconsistent information regarding the size of the Arab Muslim population in the U.S. Gaining a reliable count of Muslims in the U.S. is difficult because of federal laws; however, Mairson (2005) identified 1,209 mosques, which suggests a population of six to seven million Muslims in the U.S. One third of this number is comprised of Arab Muslims who came from one of the 22 Arab countries. The non-profit Islamic Information Center (2010) estimated the U.S. Muslim population to be around 8 million. The Lebanese are the largest group of Arabs in most states except New Jersey, where Egyptians are the largest Arab nationality (Kayyali, 2006).

According to the Arab American Institute Foundation (2008), there are four million Arab Americans in the U.S., and Muslims comprise 25-30% of the Arab American community today. During the 1960s, there was an influx of Arab families immigrating to the U.S. (Kayyali, 2006). Due to this, the number of Arab women in the U.S. has increased, thus leading to a 1.12/1 male to female ratio (Arab American Yearbook, 2008).

So who are Arab Muslim Americans? It is essential to understand who this population is prior to the examination of their lived experiences. One of the main barriers to understanding the social and cultural traits of Arab Muslims involves false definitions and stereotypes that have been propagated for decades. It is important to highlight the difference between the Arab world and the Middle East. The Arab world refers to the 22 Arab countries extending from the African shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the Arab Gulf in Asia (Mahmoud, 2001). The Middle East is a geopolitical term created by the British Empire that includes some Arab and non-Arab countries such as Iran, Turkey, and Israel, which have their own languages and cultures.

Arab Muslim Americans are citizens or residents of the U.S. who are historically immigrants or descendants of immigrants who came from countries that comprise the Arab world under certain political and social conditions. The Arab Muslim population in the U.S. is largely hidden, and there are no recent statistics available on its size. Out of the total population, there are approximately 3.5 million Arab Muslims (Zogby, 2001).

Arab Immigration

Arab immigration to the U.S. began in the 1840s (Suleiman, 1999). Most scholars refer to three major waves of Arab immigration to the U.S. in their research, the first of which began in 1875. The majority were Syrian and Lebanese Christians who worked as farmers and peddlers. After World War II, the second wave of immigration took place. The majority of these immigrants were Palestinian refugees following the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. The third wave of immigration began in the 1960s. These Arab immigrants were primarily Muslims with even higher educational backgrounds than the previous immigrants (Amer & Hovey, 2007). Since 1990, more Arabs have been migrating to the U.S. due to several political

conflicts, including the first Gulf War, the “War on Terrorism” (Afghanistan and Iraq), and the Israeli attacks on Palestinian territories and Lebanon.

The immigration of Arab Muslims to the U.S. has generally been associated with negative stereotypes and discrimination, which increased after the events of September 11th (Ibish, 2003). In addition, a considerable number of Arab Muslim immigrants come from politically and economically unstable countries, predisposing them to high risks of health and adjustment problems (Reinmann, Rodriguez-Reinmann, Ghulam, & Beylouni, 2007).

Arab Muslim Immigrants

There are many misconceptions regarding the Arab Muslim population in the U.S. The term “Arab” is a classification based largely on common language (Arabic) and a shared sense of geographic, historical, and cultural identity. The total population of the Arab world is approximately 300 million individuals across 22 nations (AAIF, 2002). Despite the national borders arbitrarily drawn between Arab countries in the post-colonial period, Arabs continue to view themselves as a unified entity regardless of current political and geographical separation. Often, Arab Americans “feel connected through common values and cultural heritage which give them their shared identity” (Arab American National Museum, 2011).

Arab Americans are Arabic-speaking individuals who were born in an Arab country and immigrated to the U.S., or those whose parents were born in an Arab country and who therefore consider themselves of Arabic origin (American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 2002). Arab Americans are heterogeneous, but share similar cultural backgrounds based on their linguistic and geographic commonalities. They constitute a population that has been growing in past years (Brittingham & de la Cruz, 2005).

There are various factors shaping the lives of Arab Muslim American women. In addition to the challenges any immigrant experiences in a new place, the American international policy and its involvement in the Middle East have been intensively impacting the daily lives of Arab Muslim Americans. Despite the complexity of the life of Arab Muslim immigrant women in the U.S., their experiences and health needs have been underrepresented in research.

Arab Muslim Culture

Because this study intends to focus solely on Arab Muslim women and their lived experiences in the U.S., it is essential to shed light on various aspects of their culture in order to understand their experiences and perspectives of what life in the U.S. is like for them as members of an underserved and often misrepresented minority group. In describing the Arab Muslim culture, the researcher will focus on major traits that are unlike those of the American culture and that play an important role in the daily lives of Arab Muslim women. The next section includes a discussion on major selected aspects of the Arab Muslim culture, including: collectivism, gender, and Islam as a way of life.

Collectivism

The Arab Muslim culture is a collectivist culture. Arab Muslim society is built around the extended family system, thus leading to a strong bond with relatives. Family is a top priority for Arab Muslims. Family members support each other both emotionally and financially (Nydell, 1987). The extended family plays an important role in Arab Muslim culture through encompassing mutual support and commitment and sharing responsibilities and obligations (Abu-Ras, 2003). Arab Muslims consider family a place of refuge that provides them with security and reassurance in difficult situations. Each family member is responsible for the

reputation of the family, as “one’s family name is a ready-made identification which reveals to all both one’s reputation and one’s access to assistance” (El Saadawi, 1993).

Gender

Men and women in the Arab Muslim culture have different gender roles. They are socialized in different ways from the time they are born. Arab Muslim women are brought up to be emotional, submissive, and strongly dependent on their families, with no independence even after marriage. A woman’s welfare is her family’s responsibility. Typically, men are the heads of households, and through this role they control the family finances and dictate what behaviors and activities are permissible for their wives and children. Women’s primary obligations are to marry, maintain the home, care for the children, and protect the honor of the family through following gender roles and maintaining cultural identity. Family honor includes the segregation of sexes, particularly through modesty for women, which includes not being alone with men who are not immediate family, as well as refraining from behaviors that are prohibited by Islam, such as premarital sex or drinking alcohol (Kayyali, 2006).

Islam as a Way of Life

The term itself “Islam” is an Arabic word meaning “submission to God,” with its derivative roots firmly planted in “salam,” or peace. Religion permeates all aspects of the Arab Muslim culture, influencing family life, child rearing, and views regarding education and work (Ajrouch, 2000). Islam strongly prescribes how Muslims should conduct themselves in their everyday lives. A major component of Islamic law pertains to the family, including its structure, values, and role responsibilities. There is no separation between practice and faith. Islam functions as a set of practical and moral guidelines that Muslims follow in order to manage their lives in a new religious and cultural environment.

Muslims are fatalistic; they believe that an individual's life and destiny are chosen by god. This belief is stated in the ubiquitous expression "insha'Allah" (God willing). Because of the role of fate in the teachings of Islam, Arab Muslims are considered survival-oriented rather than insight-oriented (Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003). Feelings of dependency on Allah (god) and fear of Allah's punishment on earth dictate their behavior. In this culture, Muslims believe that illness or hardship is a test of their faith and tolerance from God. Islam is an important element of the culture that provides guidelines for all aspects of the lives of Arab Muslims.

Immigrants undergo a process of transition that is characterized by challenge, change, and stress (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992). Acculturation is a process of cultural transition that is unique to each immigrant group and is dependent upon the cultural characteristics of immigrants as well as those of their host countries (Berry, 2003). Acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more groups and their individual members. At the group level, it involves changes in social structures, institutions, and in cultural practices. At the individual level, it involves changes in an individual's behavior. Acculturation is a long-term process that requires psychological and sociocultural adaptations that can take place easily for some groups, but can also create conflict and cause acculturative stress for others.

There are many misconceptions regarding the Arab Muslim population; for example, some believe that Arab Muslims come from the Middle East, including non-Arab countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey. Another example is that many individuals perceive Muslims as one homogenous group that is conservative and traditional. Therefore, in order to understand the

background of the participants in this study, it is essential to discuss who Arab Muslim American women are.

Arab Muslim women are a diverse religious and ethnic group. A significant number are secular, others traditional, and many practice Islam to some degree in their homes. In addition, Arab Muslim women's life styles and practices vary depending on the way they identify themselves (Arab, Muslim, Arab American, Muslim American, or American), their integration process, and their political views.

In the process of becoming and being Americans, Arab Muslims must deal with complex and multifaceted issues ranging from which language to teach their children, how to help maintain their faith in a new environment, how to secure their traditions, and how to best prepare their children to be successful and accepted in pluralistic America. Haddad (2011) described how Arab Muslim Americans view their marginalized reality in the U.S. as deliberate, specific, and at times faced by 'anti-Arab' or 'anti-Muslim' sentiments.

Arab Muslim women's acculturation has been a difficult and challenging process for various reasons, which will be discussed later in this article. It is important to mention that biculturalism is considered the healthiest adaptive strategy, whereas marginalization is a risk factor for greater mental health distress. Researchers have also found that acculturative stressors correlate with anxiety, depression, and family dysfunction (Amer & Hovey, 2005). Arab Muslim women in the U.S. today are facing greater conflicts and challenges that affect their health and adaptation process. In the following section, the researcher will identify and discuss the main factors that affect Arab Muslim women's integration into American culture.

First, Arab Muslims suffer from a collective and confused cultural identity (Nassar-McMillan, 2003). There is no specific pattern or rule used in the American government to label

any population. Often, the labeling is based on skin color, and in other cases is based on religion or language. Choosing a category or label for any population embodies an intensive political agenda. For instance, during the late 70s and the 80s, Arabs were labeled as “whites,” which made them ineligible for the many federal programs, protections, and other benefits that citizens of minority status could receive (Feldman, 2006.). Even though “whiteness” carries numerous societal privileges such as superiority, the categorization of Arabs as white only promoted invisibility and exclusion. In the 2010 census, the Arab identity issue remained controversial: some Arab Americans felt confusion, alienation, and even anger toward the undifferentiated ‘white’ race category, while others fully accepted being classified as ‘white’ (Kayyali, 2013).

Second, the World Trade Center attacks of September 2001 brought Islam, Arabs, and Muslim Americans into a critical light, causing many Americans to view Arabs and Muslims with fear and distrust. The faith and its followers has become a matter of public discourse in America. The media began to focus increased attention on Muslims ranging from Afghanis, Iraqis, Iranians, Saudis, and others with connections to wars and tragedies. After the 9/11 attacks, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim incidents of discrimination and violence against Arab Muslims have increased (Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, personal communications, 2004). This has led many Arab Muslim families into isolation and disintegration from mainstream American society; in some cases, it has led to feelings of confinement to their community.

Third, the social structure that Arab Muslims bring to the U.S. creates an impediment for the development of an Arab Muslim American identity. Arab Muslim social structure organizes differences between social groups according to religious categories (Muslim, Christian, Druze, Jew, etc.), while in the American social structure racial/ethnic identity is used for categorizing

the differences between people (Naber, 2000). Such a conflict between the two social structures creates a confused identity for Arab Muslims, often making them invisible.

Fourth, moving from one place to another embodies challenges and difficulties that affect immigrants financially, physiologically, and psychologically. There is a strong and complex relationship between immigration and health. According to Lipson (1983), immigration can affect one's life and health on every level. The researcher stated: "migration affects health directly at the biological level via dietary changes, differences in local pathogens, lack of appropriate immunity, and through the risk of accidents in new situations" (p. 857). In addition to the physiological impact of immigration, there is also psychological side that affects immigrants' mental health. For instance, the process of acculturation and assimilation can lead to either positive or negative outcomes. When positive psychological adaptation occurs, the acculturating individual develops a clear identity, strong sense of self-esteem, and a positive mental health image. Negative adaptation leads to anomie, social instability, identity confusion, and anxiety (Amer & Hovey, 2007).

The discussion of these main factors that shape the life experiences of Arab Muslims in the U.S. reflects the complexity of Arab Muslim women's acculturation process. These women must navigate two different cultures: their native culture and their hosting culture. They have to acquire financial and social stability, and they face discrimination and rejection while undergoing identity development, which is an essential process to healthy adaptation.

Of primary concern is the acculturation process of recent Arab Muslim immigrant women and the influence of acculturation on their health. Arab Muslim immigrants' health remains relatively understudied (Nasser-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003). Little is known about women in the growing and diverse Arab American Muslim population, and there is little information

available regarding their experiences after emigrating from their native countries. It is currently unknown how Arab Muslim women encounter other groups and the challenges of a new place, how they seek avenues for understanding and assistance, how they negotiate and compromise on their initial positions, and whether they achieve some degree of positive engagement.

Gaining knowledge about Arab American Muslim women is essential, as the Muslim community is growing throughout the U.S. (Ahmed, 1992). Muslim women are overcoming various challenges as they endeavor to respond to changing social conditions as an underserved minority and religious community (Saliba, 2002).

This article is based on work completed for a dissertation, the purpose of which was to provide a qualitative method to more accurately describe and better understand the experiences of Arab Muslim immigrant women in the U.S. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to describe Arab Muslim women's experiences of living in the U.S. This study provided information about Arab Muslim women's experiences since immigrating to the U.S., and their understandings of what living in a new environment means to them. This description of living in the U.S. allowed the researcher to examine the experience by entering the world of the individual to gather meaning from the viewpoint that the participant assigns to the experience (McConnell-Henry, 2005). In addition, this study intended to describe the daily lives of Arab Muslim women, thereby providing a window into the individual life and concerns described through their own voices and perspectives.

Relevant Studies

Over the past two decades, much research has begun to challenge the homogenous representation of Arab Muslim women by revealing different aspects of their lives, health issues,

and diversity in their experiences in the U.S. The following studies were selected for relevance to the population, purpose, and/or findings of this research.

Aprahamian et al. (2011) investigated the relationship between mental health and the degree of acculturation among Arab Americans. Subjects were adults of Arab or Chaldean descent who took part in the 2003 Detroit Arab American Study (DAAS). Data from 1,016 Arab American families revealed that the relationship between acculturation and mental health is complex and influenced by a number of other variables. There was significant evidence that aside from demographic variables, factors such as religion, discrimination experiences, and age at migration are also related to the mental health of Arab Americans.

In order to evaluate the level of acculturation among Arab Americans, Amer and Hovey (2007) examined the socio-demographic differences in acculturation patterns between early immigrant and second-generation Arab Americans, using data from 120 participants who completed a web-based study. The researchers assessed the impact of acculturation stress on the mental health of this population. Data suggested a high correlation between acculturation stress and mental illness.

In another study, Amer and Hovey (2005) examined the ethnic identity of Arabs. They used the Arab Ethnic Identity Measure (AEIM), a 33-item questionnaire divided into four subscales, including: Religious-Family Values (RFV), Sense of Belonging (EP), and Ethnic Arab Practices (EAP). The researchers used the Arab Acculturation Scale (AAS) and the Arab Acculturative Strategy Scale to assess acculturation. Due to the fact that the Arab American population is diverse, Amer and Hovey (2005) divided the population into subgroups, including Christian Arab Americans, to examine their acculturation process with a culturally sensitive measurement. The researchers found that there was a difference in ethnic Arab practices between

men and women. Educational status has a negative correlation with ethnic Arab practices. Compared to Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs demonstrated lower scores on ethnic Arab practices, Arab religious and family values, and intrinsic religiosity.

Acculturation and its impact on the lives of Arab Muslim women can be examined in various ways depending on the purpose of the study. Acculturation is a multifaceted, complicated process that does not only differ from one population to another, but also from a single individual to another. Jen'nan Read (2004) examined the differences between the employment rates of Arab immigrant women and native-born Arab-American women. Read used data from the U.S. Census and a national mail survey of Arab-American women. The main objective of this study was to examine cultural influences on Arab American women's activity. Jen'nan Read specifically examined the effects of nativity, ethnic identity, religious affiliation, and religiosity in the Arab American women's labor force. The study found that the differences in the employment rates of Arab immigrant women and Arab-American women were due to traditional cultural norms that prioritize women's family obligations over their outside employment and to the ethnic background that encourages traditional gender roles.

To understand the needs of Arab American families, it is crucial for health care providers to find credible resources that describe and analyze Arab cultural values and practices. This approach may facilitate the development of a positive relationship between the healthcare provider and the patient that is based on respect, trust, and tolerance, thus leading to effective outcomes. Habboush (2007) reviewed available literature on Arab cultural values and acculturation to enhance a competent school psychology practice at the individual and system levels. The researcher emphasized that levels of acculturation affect the delivery of interventions. This article highlighted the lack of empirical studies involving Arab Americans.

As aforementioned, the process of acculturation is multifaceted and influenced by a wide variety of factors. To understand the psychological status and level of social integration of Arab American college students, Henry et al. (2008) examined parental acculturation levels and well-being to facilitate the examination of the well-being of Arab American youth. The researchers examined several factors that affect the well being of Arab American college students, such as parental acculturation, parental control, and parental preservation of their culture. The study identified two dimensions of acculturation, contact participation and dominant society immersion, as well as two types of preserving one's culture: cultural maintenance and ethnic group affiliation.

According to this study, Arab American college students' psychological well-being is affected by the degree to which their parents are open to the American culture and seek to preserve their Arabic culture. The study found that students who perceived their parents as lacking openness to American culture and exerting high levels of control tended to report lower levels of well-being. Conversely, students who perceived their parents as working hard to preserve their native Arab culture and exerting low levels of control reported higher levels of well-being.

Finally, Mays (2003) explored the lives of 25 Muslim students at an American university. In this ethnography, the goal was to gain greater insight into the experiences and needs of Muslim college students. The study was conducted immediately after the September 11th attacks. Considering the fear that some Muslims experienced after the attacks, it was surprising that the students were eager to participate and share their feelings. Mays found that wherever people go, they are looking for signs of community and ways to connect with others. The

researcher also discovered that although these students were all Muslims, there was a high degree of variance in their behaviors and views.

Current research on the issues facing Arab Muslim women in the U.S. is limited, although this population experiences many difficulties and problems (Nasser-McMillan, 2003). The most serious of these include: discrimination, abuse, isolation, high rates of hypertension, diabetes, risk factors for heart disease, stress, and anxiety (Hassoun, 1999). As the previous section on relevant literature has demonstrated, there is not only a paucity of research on Arab Muslim immigrants' health, but also a scarcity of qualitative research that focuses on the role of acculturation in the health of the Arab Muslim population in the U.S.

Definition of Terms

Arab: A member of Semitic People inhabiting an Arabic region, whose language and Islamic religion spread widely throughout the Middle East and northern Africa from the seventh century; a member of an Arabic-speaking group (American Heritage, Dictionary, 2003).

Arab Muslim women: Muslim (denoted from birth) females from an Arab country in which Arabic is the main language.

Immigrant: An individual who comes to a country to take up permanent residence (American Heritage, Dictionary, 2003).

Islam: The word "Islam" means peace in Arabic; Islam is a monolithic religion characterized by the acceptance of the doctrine of submission to God and the Prophet Muhammad (Islamic Dictionary).

Muslims: Individuals who practice Islam.

Culture: The heritage of learned symbolic behavior that makes humans human. It is the heritage that individuals in a particular society share (Keesing, 2010).

Acculturation. Acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005).

Innovation

The proposed study will describe the experiences of Arab Muslim women living in the U.S. This study will provide information about Arab Muslim women's experiences since immigrating to the U.S., and will provide a greater understanding of what living in this new environment means to them. The study has the potential to increase awareness of those who interact with Arab Muslim immigrant women and their functioning in the mainstream culture, use of resources or agencies, and decisions they make that shape their current acculturation outcomes. This information will be useful in the design of future research studies about services for this population.

APPROACH

Study Design

A qualitative descriptive design will be used in this study. The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of Arab Muslim women living in the U.S in order to produce a straightforward description of the phenomenon in their everyday vocabulary (Sandelowski, 2000). This description of living in the U.S. will allow the researcher to examine the experience by entering the world of the individual to interpret meaning from the viewpoint of the participant (McConnell-Henry, 2005). For such a study and purpose, a qualitative descriptive research design will be the most appropriate approach to answer the research question: “What are Arab Muslim women’s experiences with living in the U.S.?” The focus of the study is on the meanings participants assign to the experience.

Sample

The criteria for selection involve a community purposeful sampling of female, Arab Muslims older than 21 years of age and residing in the U.S. for 2-6 years. The study will exclude Arab Muslim women who are unable to verbally communicate. Participants may be monolingual (Arabic speakers) or bilingual (Arabic and English speakers). Participants will be provided an Arabic translated version of the eligibility survey and the informed consent form. Participants’ involvement will begin after signing the informed consent form and will end after the submission of the manuscript. The proposed sample size is determined by saturation. Saturation in qualitative research may be reached with fewer participants and will be reflected when the information obtained becomes redundant (Creswell, 2009).

Data Collection

Data collection will be achieved through semi-structured interviews that will be audio-recorded. Each participant will select the location and time of the interview. Participants will be interviewed after signing the informed consent form. Arabic interpretation or translation will be offered if needed. Participants' involvement will require one interview lasting one to two hours. The major research question for this qualitative descriptive study is: "What are Arab Muslim women's experiences of living in the U.S.?" The following questions are examples of probes that will be used:

1. Tell me about your life since immigrating to the U.S.
2. What is it like to live in the U.S.?
3. Has your social network changed since immigrating to the U.S.?
4. Can you describe your relationship with others?
5. What kinds of activities do you take part in on a typical day? How do you spend your time?

A professional bilingual transcriptionist will transfer the audio-recorded material verbatim. The transcribed material will then be reviewed and compared with the audiotapes for accuracy by the researcher. Following this step, the researcher will read and reread the transcripts identifying patterns, which will then be placed into categories and used to identify themes. Data analysis will be conducted through the theoretical lens of John Berry's Acculturation model and Social Cognitive Theory.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was iterative, beginning with data collection and continuing through the entire analysis period. The first step of the data analysis and the data preparation is the

transcription of the audiotaped interviews. The transcripts will be completed based on the transcription protocol. This will minimize the chances of obtaining incompatible transcript “products” to reduce the likelihood that data analysis will be compromised or delayed (McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003). As part of the transcription protocol, the recording will be edited to exclude any identifying information that may compromise the confidentiality of the participants; it will then be transcribed verbatim in its entirety. Rigor in qualitative research is associated with openness, scrupulous adherence to a philosophical perspective, and thoroughness in collecting data, and consideration of all data management.

The protocol that will be followed for the data analysis is based on Creswell’s (2009) data analysis. The steps for analysis will include an in-depth description of the researcher’s experience with the phenomena. It is important that the researcher describe their own experience of the phenomena, as this will help in setting aside biases, or what van Manen (1990) referred to as a phase of “reflective journaling.” The description is not an interpretation of the stories, but rather a description of them. The data will be examined to identify common themes, extracting significant statements in order to compile a set of themes based on the research question and leading to the creation of “meaning units” and textual descriptions. To achieve this, the transcriptions will be read several times and significant statements will be extracted for closer evaluation. The statements that are similar in meaning will be grouped together to form “meaning units.” Reflecting on the transcripts, the researcher will provide a textural description, which is a description of the participant’s experience with the phenomenon; this will include verbatim examples.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

Qualitative inquiry refutes the idea of reliability (replication) of research, as human experience is viewed as unique and truth is viewed as subjective. For qualitative inquiry, there are procedures for ensuring research quality and rigor. Quality and rigor in this qualitative descriptive research will be achieved through trustworthiness criteria. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness criteria are more appropriate than traditional criteria (reliability and validity) for achieving the quality and rigor of qualitative inquiry. For this study, four criteria were utilized to assure the quality of the inquiry: (1) Credibility, (2) Transferability, (3) Dependability, and (4) Confirmability.

Credibility in this study will be achieved through the use of multiple strategies. First, the researcher will ensure a prolonged, substantial engagement with participants, meet a few times with each, and discuss the concerns relating to their lives even before audio-recording the interviews. Second, persistent observation will be exhibited through the in-depth recording of the interviews. Finally, peer debriefing will be utilized to enhance the dependability and credibility of the study. According to Sandelowski (2000), a qualitative study is credible when it “presents such faithful descriptions or interpretations of human experience that the individuals having that experience would immediately recognize them from those descriptions as their own” (p. 335). A peer will read each transcript and a debriefing session will be used for a discussion of the findings.

Transferability will be accomplished through a thick description of the research process, allowing readers to determine whether the results can be transferred to a different setting. This study will provide sufficient details, enabling the reader to make such a judgment through a careful description of the context and culture of the participants.

Dependability and confirmability will be achieved through auditability. Auditability is the maintenance of a research or decision trail concerning the study from beginning to end. The study will maintain a decision trail that provides the reader with a detailed description of its progression. The researcher will achieve auditability through the detailed description/explanation of how decisions or concerns were approached in each phase of the study.

The aforementioned processes are some of the strategies for ensuring quality and rigor in this qualitative descriptive study. Coordinating between investigators in team research, crosschecking codes, using an external auditor (Creswell, 2009), and presenting a subject-oriented truth rather than a researcher-defined truth (Sandelowski, 1986) are other procedures considered in this study for generating a rigorous qualitative research.

PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

Human Subjects Involvement

The Institutional Review Board for The University of Texas at El Paso will approve this study. Flyers in Arabic and English will be distributed in the community, primarily in the areas that are populated by these women. If the participant agrees to take part in this study, they will contact the researcher to select a time and place for the interview. The researcher will ask the participant first to read the informed consent form and ensure that all parts of the form are clear. Each participant will sign a consent form (Appendix E).

The researcher will protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants by editing any portion of the recordings that contain identifiers. The recordings will be identified with a code specific to each participant. Only the PI and the Co-PI will have access to the information of the participant's identity and code. The participant's name will not be used when data from this study are published. Every effort will be made to keep research records and other personal information confidential. An additional risk is a breach of subject's privacy and confidentiality. The research team will take extreme measures to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality. The PI will keep all identifying information confidential. The data records will include an identification number and no identifying information, and all data will be locked and stored. The confidentiality of electronic data will be maintained during collection through the use of PINs (personal identification numbers). Confidentiality will be strictly maintained throughout the study.

These methods of privacy and confidentiality will ensure the protection of the information of the participants. The investigators are also aware of the rules and regulations regarding research and the specific requirements for the dissemination of information. The

investigator will send all material intended for dissemination to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Potential Risks

Potential risks to subjects in this study are considered to be no greater than minimal. There are some potential risks and discomfort involved in the study, such as recalling difficult situations or discussing sensitive experiences. A referral list for various mental health care services/facilities will be provided to participants.

The PI is prepared for the occurrence of anticipated or unanticipated adverse events. In this study, the researcher will use the FDA definition of serious adverse events (SAEs). SAEs will be systematically assessed prior to the interviews. Any SAE, whether related or not to the study, will be reported to the IRB. In the event that a participant either withdraws from the study or the investigator decides to discontinue a participant due to SAE or any other health issues, they will be referred to a health care provider. A summary of SAEs, withdrawal, and discontinuation will be included in the annual progress report to the IRB.

In the case that a participant feels uncomfortable and/or frustrated, they will be instructed to stop and will be immediately referred to the appropriate medical provider. Such a situation will be immediately reported within 24 hours of its occurrence via email to the IRB followed by a written report within 10 working days.

Precautions to Mitigate Risks

The participants will choose the time and place of their interviews. This will allow them to feel comfortable and safe in discussing their experiences. The recordings (data) will not use identifiers. The researcher will protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants by editing any portion of the recordings that contains identifying information. The recordings will

be identified with a code specific to each participant. Only the PI and the Co-PI will have access to the information of the participants' identities and codes. Participants' names will not be used when data from this study are published. Every effort will be made to keep research records and other personal information confidential.

The identities of the participants, the study ID, and the recordings will be kept confidential by the principal investigator (PI) in a secured cabinet in the PI's office at the University of Texas at El Paso. Collected forms (demographic survey and Informed consent form) will be transported to the PI's office, which only the PI will have access to. Any problems detected will be discussed and taken care of by the PI. Research data, including the primary verbatim transcripts will be retained for a sufficient period to allow for analysis and dissemination.

Benefits to Participants

There will be no direct benefits to be gained by participants, but this description of living in the U.S. may increase current knowledge and understanding of Arab Muslim women's needs. It may also provide insight into use in the design of future research studies regarding functioning in the mainstream culture, use of resources or agencies, and the decisions they make that shape their acculturation outcomes.

Data Collection

The demographic questionnaire (Appendix G) was designed to solicit basic information about the participants (name, age, ethnicity, place of origin, marital status), level of education, religious classification (practicing or non-practicing), and length of residency in the U.S. The questionnaire proved helpful in demonstrating a sense of participants' identities. Participants will complete the questionnaire after they provide the informed consent form (Appendix E) and

before starting the interview. The researcher will proceed to interview the participants after verifying that they meet the inclusion criteria based on information from the questionnaire.

Observations

There are various types of observations that the researcher can employ. Spradley (1980) identified five types of participation, including: (1) Nonparticipation, in which the observer has no involvement with the individuals being studied; (2) Passive participation, in which the observer has limited interaction with the people being studied; (3) Moderate participation, in which the observer seeks to maintain balance between being an insider and outsider in the research setting; (4) Active participation in order to learn the accepted cultural rules of behavior through doing what the people being studied are doing, and (5) Complete participation, where the observer is studying a situation in which s/he is already a participant.

The researcher in this study will employ the active and moderate participatory observer role, according to Spradley's criteria, depending on the setting of the interview. The researcher will utilize an active observer role when the interview takes place at the mosque. This active observer role will include following the dress code required for the mosque (cover the head and the whole body) and performing some of the religious practices, such as praying and reading parts of the Quran to build rapport with the participants. A moderate participatory observer role will be utilized when the interview takes place either at the gatekeeper or participant's house. In these two settings, the researcher will observe their interactions during the gathering at the gatekeeper's house, but will not participate. The researcher will also observe each participant's interactions with her family at her home before going to a different room to begin the interview.

Interviews

In qualitative research, the researcher has several choices for the type of the interview that best fits the study. Cohen and Manion (1994) stated that there are four types of interview techniques that can be used as research tools, including: structured, semi-structured/unstructured, non-directive, and focused. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews will be the method employed for data collection. Because the participants in this study have unique stories to tell, semi-structured and open-ended interviews seemed best to establish the flow of inquiry. It is unlikely that any other approach will capture the depth of the participants' experiences. This type of interview will grant the participants the flexibility of choice to focus on particular experiences and to arrange the time sequence as desired. Such flexibility is intended to enter the world of the participants in order to understand their realities and generate rich descriptions of their lived experiences as Arab Muslim immigrant women in the U.S.

Setting and Procedure

The setting for the study is El Paso, Texas, one of the major border cities located along the 2000-mile U.S.-Mexico border. El Paso is located in the outermost tip of West Texas. It has the state of New Mexico to its west and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico to the South. The size of the Arab Muslim population in El Paso is unknown. The Department of Health in El Paso and the Records office do not have any data on the number of Arab Muslims. The Islamic Center of El Paso provided an estimate of 5,000 people based on the number of individuals who attend the center. The need for descriptive research is clear, and this study has the potential to increase the awareness of those who interact with Arab Muslim immigrant women regarding their functioning in mainstream culture, use of resources or agencies, and the decisions they make that shape their acculturation outcomes.

Article 1

Arab Muslim Women's Experiences of Living in the United States: A Descriptive Qualitative Study

Introduction

Arab Muslim immigrant women are a group within the American Muslim population that are underrepresented and sometimes appear to be invisible. With the growth of this population, there is an increased need for research that addresses Arab Muslim women in the U.S., and examines their immigration experiences through the telling of their own stories.

According to the Arab American Institute Foundation, there are four million Arab Americans and Muslims that comprise 25-30% of the Arab American community today (2008). During the 60s, there was an influx of Arab families' immigration to the U.S. (Kayyali, 2006). Due to this, the number of Arab women in the U.S. has increased with 1.12/1 male to female ratio (Arab American Yearbook, 2008). There are many misconceptions regarding this population; for example, some people believe that Arab Muslims come from the Middle East, including non-Arab countries like Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey. Another example is that many people perceive Muslims as one homogenous group that is conservative and traditional. In order to understand the background of the participants in this study, it is essential to discuss who Arab Muslim American women are.

Arab Muslim women represent a diverse religious and ethnic group. A significant number are secular, traditional, and others practice Islam to some degree in their homes. Their life styles and practices vary depending on the way they identify themselves (Arab, Muslim, Arab American, Muslim American, or American), their integration process, and their political views. Arab Muslim women in the U.S. share commonalties and differences in their daily lives and belief systems. Little is known about women in the growing and diverse Arab American Muslim population, and there is little information available about their experiences after emigrating from their native countries.

There are various factors shaping the lives of Arab Muslim women in the U.S. First, the American international policy and its involvement in the Middle East have largely impacted the American media by producing a negative representation of Arab/Muslim Americans. In addition, since the September 11th, 2001 attacks, the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq have been intensifying explicit and implicit negative images and perceptions of Arabs and Muslims.

Second, there is a strong and complex relationship between immigration and health. Moving from one place to another place embodies challenges and difficulties that affect immigrants in numerous areas, including financially, physiologically, and psychologically. Immigration can affect one's life and health at every level. According to Lipson (1983), "migration affects health directly at the biological level via dietary changes, differences in local pathogens, lack of appropriate immunity, and through the risk of accidents in new situations" (p. 857). Third, migration is a difficult process and can be a very stress-inducing experience, one that can lead to various social and mental health issues ranging from social isolation and adjustment limitations to depression and anxiety (Norris & Inglehart, 2012). The psychological effects of migration are immense. For instance, the process of acculturation can lead to either positive or negative outcomes. When positive psychological adaptation occurs, the acculturating individual develops a clear identity, strong sense of self-esteem, and positive mental health image. Negative adaptation leads to anomie, identity confusion, and anxiety (Amer & Hovey, 2007). The limited information about immigrant women in the Arab American Muslim population may create significant barriers to meeting needs of this population. The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of Arab Muslim immigrant women living in the U.S.

Theoretical Framework

Berry's Acculturation Model and Social Cognitive theory both provide a framework from which to view the experiences of Arab Muslim immigrant women living in the U.S.

Acculturation, development, adaptation, and change in diverse cultural locales strongly appeared in the data.

Acculturation and Berry's Acculturation Model

Contemporary views on acculturation have moved away from looking at it as a unilinear, unidimensional process to a more multilinear, multidimensional process. Berry (1986) and his colleagues proposed that the course of adaptation an individual goes through is comprised of two orthogonal processes: (a) Adaptation to the norms of the new culture, and (b) Maintenance of the norms of the indigenous culture. Kim and Abreu (2001) termed the second as "enculturation" to describe the process of being socialized while retaining one's indigenous cultural norms. The acculturation process can occur in different ways for various members of the same ethnic group.

The study of acculturation has evolved to an understanding that there may be different elements of an individual's culture of origin and the host culture at any given time (an orthogonal view of acculturation). This means an individual's acculturation should not be described in *degree* or *level*, as doing so implies that it is a unilinear process (Berry, 2005). Acculturation involves the psychological adaptation that takes place when two or more cultural groups come into contact (Wrobel et al., 2009). Acculturation at the level of the individual is the process in which elements of the country of origin and new country are retained and internalized. Acculturation is not a one-way path, but rather is a multi-dimensional process in which an individual may internalize more than one culture (Arfken et al., 2009).

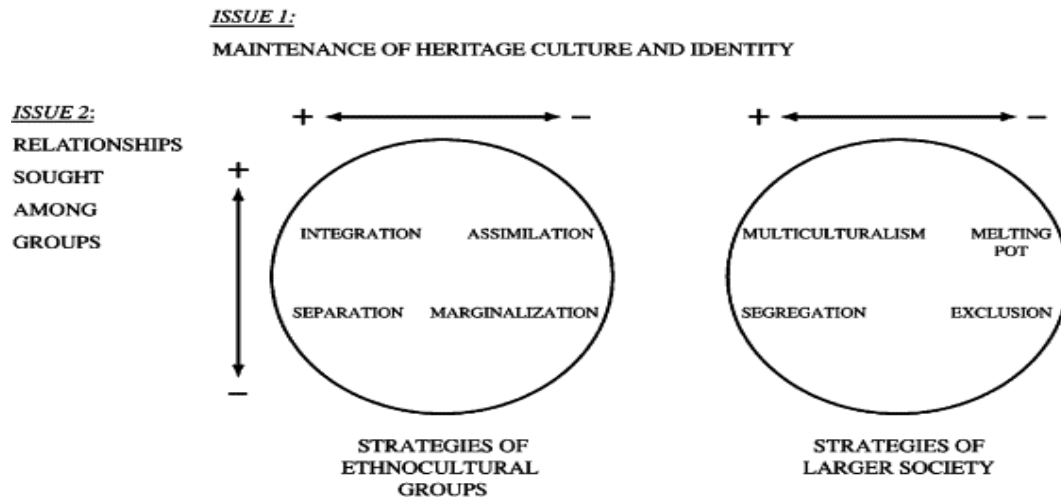


Figure 1. Acculturative Stress Model (Berry et al., 1987).

Acculturation has been used in several studies as a measuring tool or an important variable for examining other social and health aspects of a population. Acculturation plays an important role in health status and treatment seeking behavior. Berry (1980) and other theorists have argued that biculturalism is the healthiest adaptive strategy, whereas marginalization is a risk factor for greater mental health distress. Researchers have also found that acculturative stressors correlate with anxiety, depression, and family dysfunction.

The most well-known acculturation model was proposed by John Berry. According to this model, acculturating individuals select one of four acculturation strategies:

1. Assimilation: Taking place when individuals choose to abandon their traditional culture and adopt the culture of the host society.
2. Separation: Taking place when individuals decide to retain their culture of origin and refrain from adopting the mainstream culture.
3. Integration: Taking place when individuals find value in both adopting the new culture and retaining the old.

4. Marginalization: Taking place when individuals choose disengagement from both the native and the hosting culture (2001).

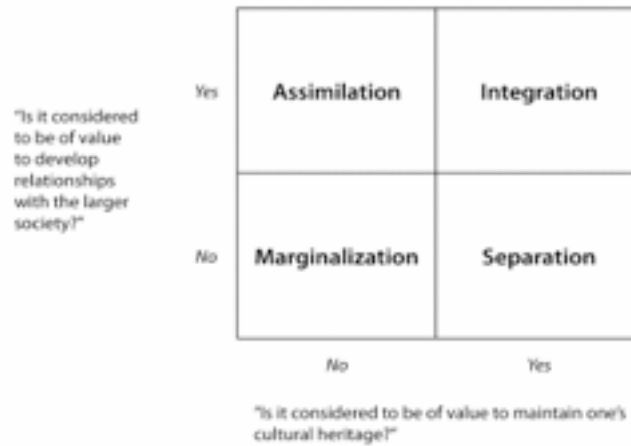


Figure 2. Berry's Acculturation Model (Berry, 1980).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is well suited for this study, as it elucidates human personal development, adaptation, and changes in diverse cultural locales. Social Cognitive Theory applies an “agentic perspective” to human development. SCT distinguishes among three modes of agency: “(1) personal agency exercised individually; (2) proxy agency in which people secure desired outcomes by influencing others to act on their behalf; and (3) collective agency in which people act in concert to shape their future” (Bandura, 2002, p. 275). Each of these agentic modes is necessary to make it through the day within the cultural context in which one lives.

In the personal agency, individuals depend on themselves and endure their environment as part of managing their lives. In many societies, individuals do not have direct control over external conditions, such as social and political, which affect their everyday lives. Under these circumstances, people seek “their well-being and valued outcomes through the exercise of proxy-agency.” In this mode, individuals try to gain the support of those who have access to resources

or who are influential in order to secure the outcomes they desire. The third mode is collective agency. Due to the fact that many things in accomplishments can be achieved only through “socially interdependent efforts,” people must use their knowledge, skills, and resources to provide mutual support to secure what they cannot attain on their own. Through these agencies, individuals ways to adapt in diverse environments, creating “devices that compensate immensely for their sensory and physical limitations, circumvent environmental constraints, redesign and construct environments to their liking, create styles of behavior that enable them to realize desired outcomes” (Bandura, 2002, p. 281).

SCT also highlights the importance of self-efficacy and collective efficacy in human development and adaptation. Self-efficacy is the belief that one has the power to produce desired effects through their actions. Self-efficacy affects one’s thinking in “self-enhancing” or “self-debilitating” ways, such as how well they persevere in difficult situations and the choices they make at important points. Collective efficacy is the belief in individual’s shared values and their potential ability to use resources and effort as a group to achieve the desired collective outcomes. According to SCT, there is a commonality in “basic agentic capacities and mechanisms of operation, but diversity in the culturing of these inherent capacities” (Bandura, 2002). SCT acknowledges the fact that each culture has its own psychosocial systems that consist of values, a belief system, and “agentic” capabilities through which individual’s experiences are shaped.

Methods

Study Design

A qualitative descriptive design was used in this study to explore Arab Muslim women’s experiences of living in the U.S in order to produce a straightforward description of the phenomenon in their everyday vocabulary (Sandelowski, 2000). The commonalities related to

their experiences related to daily functioning in the mainstream culture, use of resources or agencies, and the decisions they make that shape their current acculturation outcomes were the focus of this research. After approval was obtained from the University Institutional Review Board, participants were recruited through a local mosque and an Arab key informant. A standard consent form was obtained from each participant prior to the interviews.

Participants

The study recruited 15 Arab Muslim women residing in the southwestern U.S. in communities along the Texas/Mexico border. Each participant was contacted through a “snowball” sampling method in which they provided the names of other possible participants after each interview. Inclusion criteria were those individuals who are Arab Muslim women, 21 years of age and older, and residing in the southwestern U.S. for a minimum of 2 years while not exceeding 6 years. This age range was chosen because it is common at this time for Arab Muslim women to become somewhat less dependent on family and to think independently about their purpose and direction in life. The time interval of 2-6 years of living in the U.S. was set because research shows that the longer individuals reside in the U.S., the more likely it is that they will have a different experience of adjustment and adaption than recent immigrants.

Arab Muslim women who were pregnant, who self-reported a current or previous mental health disorder, women who were prescribed anti-depressant medications, and women who were unable to verbally communicate were excluded. The sample size was determined by saturation. Saturation in qualitative research may be reached with fewer participants and will be reflected when the information obtained becomes redundant (Creswell, 2009).

All participants were from Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, or Jordan and were all bilingual (Arabic and English); however, the majority preferred to fill out the

Arabic version of the consent form and the demographic questionnaire and to be interviewed in Arabic. Care was taken in selecting the participants to achieve as representative a sample as possible considering demographics and personal backgrounds, but this proved to be quite difficult. Fourteen of the participants wear the hijab (head scarf) and were very religious. One participant did not wear the hijab and considered herself non-religious, but did participate in some Islamic practices such as fasting during Ramadan (the fasting month for Muslims). Fourteen of the participants were married and had children. One participant was single and lived alone in the U.S. Their education levels varied from ninth grade to doctoral level. Six participants worked and the rest were housewives.

Table 1

Individual Profiles of Participants

Participants	Country of Origin	Length of Residency	Age/Educational Level	Marital Status/Children	Practicing Islam	Have a Job	Family/Extended Family	Socialize with Non – Arab Muslim
#1	Lebanon	2 yrs.	31 B.S.	Married 1 child	Yes	No	No	Yes
#2	Jordan	2.5 yrs.	35 Associate Degree	Married 1 child	Yes	No	No	No
#3	Palestine	3.5 yrs.	47 yrs. High School	Married 4 children	Yes	No	No	Yes
#4	Kuwait	6 yrs.	37 yrs. B.S.	Married 3 children	Yes	No	Yes	No
#5	Morocco	4 yrs.	35 yrs. Middle School	Married 2 children	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
#6	Libya	5 yrs.	38 yrs. Associate Degree	Married 4 children	Yes	No	No	Yes
#7	Morocco	6 yrs.	50 yrs. High School	Married 4 children	Yes	No	No	Yes
#8	Saudi Arabia	3 yrs.	40 yrs. B.S.	Married 2 children	Yes	Yes	No	No
#9	Jordan	3.5 yrs.	34 PhD	Single	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
#10	Lebanon	3 yrs.	41 yrs. Associate Degree	Married 5 children	Yes	No	No	No
#11	Libya	5 yrs.	40 yrs. Middle School	Married 6 children	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
#12	Jordan	5 yrs.	40 yrs. B.A.	Married 6 children	Yes	No	No	Yes
#13	Libya	2.5 yrs.	28 yrs. B.S.	Married 2 children	Yes	No	No	No
#14	Libya	5 yrs.	30 M.A.	Married 2 children	Yes	No	No	No
#15	Palestine	4 yrs.	49 Associate Degree	Married 1 child	Yes	No	Yes	No

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with data collection and continued through a recursive, iterative process. A bilingual transcriptionist transcribed the audio-recorded material verbatim. The transcribed material was reviewed and compared with the audio files for accuracy by the researcher. The researcher translated the transcriptions from Arabic to English. An Arabic linguist was consulted for back translation service to ensure accuracy. The researcher built patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up, implementing an inductive process with a focus on learning the meaning the participants held.

Observations were recorded regarding behaviors and conversations that occurred. The researcher employed both the active and the moderate participatory observer roles according to Spradley's criteria depending on the setting of the interview. Although the researcher was familiar with many women in the Arab Muslim community, and even more so with those involved in the religious gatherings, she employed an active observer role when the interview took place at the mosque. The researcher needed to follow the dress code required for the mosque (cover the head and body), and was required to perform some of the religious practices, such as praying and reading parts of the Quran, not to learn them, but to build rapport with the participants. A moderate participatory observer role was utilized when the interview took place either at the key informant or participant's homes. In these two settings, the researcher observed the women's interactions during the gathering at the gatekeeper's house, but did not participate. The researcher also observed each participant's interaction with her family in her home before going to a different room to begin the interview.

After transcription, the researcher's first step was conducting several reexaminations of data to move deeper into understanding, representing, and making an interpretation of the larger

meaning. The researcher placed her comments on the margins of the text and then, after several readings, on color-coded index cards to record any potential themes that appeared in the data. Both interview and observational data were used in the comments. After this step, the researcher also read the text an additional time and highlighted portions that seemed relevant to the categories chosen from the review. The researcher reviewed the highlighted portions in search of meanings and clusters of words. A final selective reading was performed to look for specific instances of themes that were prevalent. The themes were viewed through the lens of Berry's Acculturation Model and Social Cognitive Theory.

At various times during the analysis, the developing themes became the focus of questions in follow-up interviews. Adding to this process, the researcher sought peers for examination and a perspective on the speculative themes. The researcher discussed the themes with two colleagues in the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences doctoral program who were also conducting qualitative research. These additional perspectives helped to reevaluate, modify, or eliminate themes.

Findings

This section presents the thoughts and experiences of 15 Arab Muslim women regarding living in the U.S. The general research question was: "What are Arab Muslim immigrant women's experiences of living in the U.S.?" The following questions were addressed: (1) How has life been for Arab Muslim women since immigrating to the U.S.? (2) Has their social network changed since immigrating to the U.S.? (3) What does their daily life look like? (4) What do they do and from whom do they seek comfort during difficult times? (5) What do they do for fun? (6) What resources are they lacking? The following section presents the experiences of the participants as they were navigating two cultures and adjusting in a host society.

To further develop and unite the themes, the researcher created classification schemes. One classification scheme related to each participant's life journey and acculturation pattern in the new place. By studying the themes, constructing classification schemes, and relating the different pieces of the data to each other, the researcher was able to generate rich descriptions of Arab Muslim immigrant women's experiences of living in America.

The coding process required bringing together all data, including the themes, ideas, concepts, and descriptions. The researcher did this by listing the final themes and concepts by category. Once the researcher identified the major categories, she assigned a number to each for sorting purposes. After sorting through the data manually, which involved cutting quotes from transcripts and printing them out using a different font color for each and placing each category in a separate file folder, the researcher began refining and tightening the ideas. This resulted in the final emergent themes.

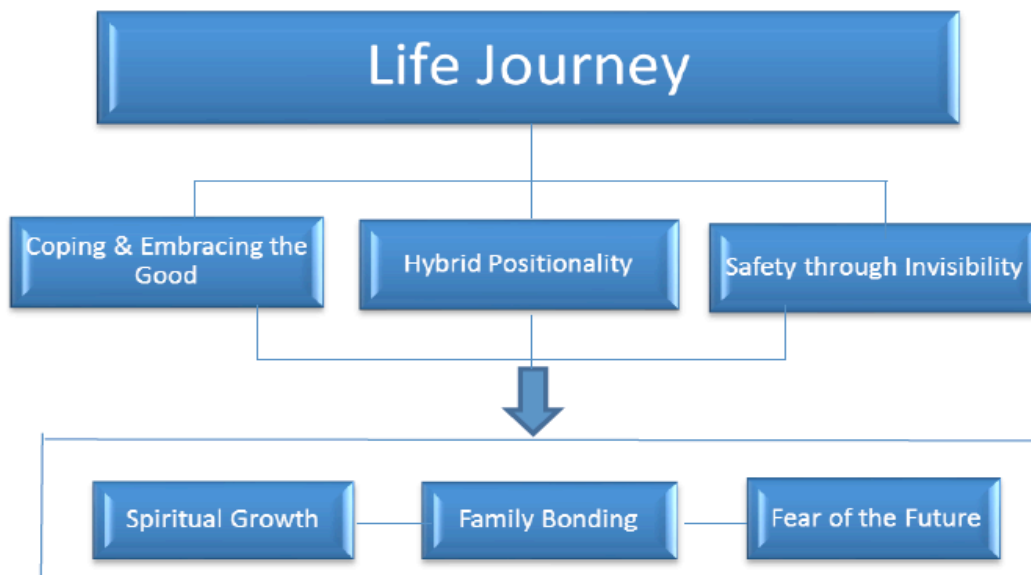


Figure 3. Arab Muslim women's life journeys in the United States.

Emergent Themes

Commonalities with issues concerning the following themes were apparent: religion, family, and life in the future. Within each theme are specific categories that were found to be significant in their lives. For instance, within their living journeys in the U.S., participants discussed their lifestyles, attitudes, and behaviors reflecting different acculturation outcomes. It seemed that whether the participants felt alienated or settled and adapted to the American society was dependent on the type of challenges they encountered as well as their desire to be in this country.

Coping and Embracing the Good

Despite the small number of participants, there were a wide variety of perspectives regarding living in the U.S., and how these perspectives shaped the distance between the participant and their host society. Six participants demonstrated how their decision to interact with the hosting society, accepting their new roles, and their willingness to adopt some behavioral changes to meet the needs of the new location made them experience less stress and achieve better adaptation. For participant 008, the needs of the new place forced her to be independent:

Customs are completely different. As you know, women in Saudi Arabia don't drive or talk to men. When we go out we have to cover our faces and not to talk to men. So our interaction with men is very limited. Most of the time the limited interaction takes place indirectly. I found myself here in need to face things and be independent.

Participant 006 also discussed the behavioral change that occurred for her due to the lifestyle and new demands of the new location:

The difference is mainly about the system. It is so organized. You know what you need to do. This is so different from my country. Now I do a lot of things by myself like paying

the rent and doing several errands that we don't have back home. My life style has changed. Thank God, I acquired a lot of skills and learned new things.

Participant 010 discussed the fact that she wanted to be in America. Even though she encountered numerous difficulties, she considered herself lucky to be in the U.S:

I consider myself lucky to come here. Thank God, I have no difficulties now... I came here with lots of hopes and ambitions I wanted to achieve. At the beginning I faced difficulties, but I met a lot of people who helped. Step by step I was able to adjust to the new place... My son is doing well in college and my second son will graduate this year from high school. My younger children are happy at their school. So thank God they are adjusting.

The common aspect between these six participants is that they all faced various adverse challenges or life changing events when they came to the country. Based on Social Cognitive theory, these participants demonstrated self-efficacy. They believed that they had the power to produce certain desired effects by their actions. These women's experiences revealed how well they persevered in difficult situations, as well as the choices they made to achieve positive outcomes. The necessity to look for resources and seek services urged this group to interact and develop connections with the hosting community. They seem integrated into both the local Muslim and hosting communities; they are involved with family, the Muslim community, and the hosting society. They seemed settled and firmly grounded. Participant 010 stated:

I always thank God for coming here.... Coming to the U.S. was very beneficial mainly for my children and my husband. My husband received a good treatment here. His health was worsening in the United Arab Emirates. They used to give him tranquilizers. But

here they diagnosed him and gave him an effective treatment for his illness. He is able to work and be normal.

Aside from the harsh challenges these six participants encountered, they all desired to live in the U.S. and were the ones who made the decision to migrate. Participant 008 stated:

So far the consequences of my decision are good. It was the right decision to come here al-hamdulillah (Thank God). America has helped my children and me to overcome the difficulties.

Two of these women had seriously ill children that required advanced healthcare. One participant had a husband who lost his job in their native country due to mental illness and his regressing health. The other three women experienced severe financial difficulties. These six women viewed moving to the U.S. with a sense of hope. Though they struggled significantly at the beginning, they clearly stated that they eventually gained control over their lives. Participant 014 stated:

Going back to Libya worries me. Here we got used to privacy...There is freedom in selecting the people to have relationships with. It is not like in Libya where you have to visit your second cousin and your father's cousin. You have too. Here it is much better...

Here we have health insurance because we are students. I like the healthcare services and hospitals. Even though healthcare is free in Libya, the service is bad. Here it is better.

Their experiences reflect a sense of rootedness associated with both old and new homelands. They create continuity between past, present, and the imagined future. Participant 015 shared her experience of living in the U.S., highlighting aspects from her the past (life in Palestine), the present, and the future:

Moving to here had positives... I felt better when I came here. I was able to move freely and regain my freedom... Life in Palestine was so hard... It was hard at the beginning here, but now we have adjusted and I am fine. My life will be even better in the future.

Their living experiences in the U.S. forced them into a state of examining and understanding their needs in their new location. They were able to compensate for the loss of family support by refiguring their relationship with others within their family, the Muslim community, and the larger community as well. Such a process strengthened their desire and ability to integrate with others and the hosting community. Participant 003 stated:

The main need was encompassing my children and sustaining open communication channels with them. So when my children come home after school they are free and available to interact with me and me too. This made us become closer to each other... I focused on bringing my children to the mosque to connect with children that share the same norms and take religious classes... I am happy and satisfied with my life and social life here. Even though I do not have my family here, I am satisfied.

They were able to define and make sense of themselves and the world in which they live.

Participant 009 stated that living alone in America enabled her to better understand herself and recognize her strengths:

Here I got used to independence; no one interfering in my life and being responsible for myself. There is an important point here I like to mention. Now I worry more about myself and became more protective of myself. I am also more confident of my abilities than before because here I am the father, the mother, and the brother of myself. Independence taught me that no one can interfere in my life and I am responsible for everything.

The theme of coping and embracing the good that was evident in the narrations of these six women reflected their acceptance and the adaptation of their beliefs to the new situation. Berry (1980) suggested that there is a three-phase course of acculturation, contact, conflict, and adaptation, wherein the first is necessary, the second is probable, and the third is inevitable. This explains the life journeys and the positive outcomes of these six women. While discussing their lives, they did not show that they had experienced conflict, but rather exhibited a maintenance of cultural integrity as well as the interactions and movement that helped them to become an integral part of a larger community.

Participant 008 acknowledged the fact that life in American and the new demands changed her in a way that promoted strength and independence:

I was not like this in Saudi Arabia. We were isolated and the father will do everything for you. May be I did not get the opportunity. May be America made me like this...My education has empowered me. In Saudi Arabia, we did study religion. They made us memorize parts of the Qur'an but without understanding and examining the meaning. Here, religion is done through understanding and being convinced. It is your choice or you feel like going to the mosque. Islam is everywhere and at all the times. In this country, my faith and religion grew stronger.

The women also displayed a positive attitude toward the dominant culture. They were participating in the hosting society, while also striving to preserve their cultural heritage.

Participant 006 discussed how she reinforces her children's religious identity:

We teach our children to discuss things with us. So far they are doing well. Sometimes they question things for not being able to do things like the other children...Talking to them and making them aware of the dangers and their religious duties. Seeing them

coming to the mosque, have a strong Islamic identity, practicing Islam and following instructions relaxes me a little.

These women were able to retain some features of their heritage culture while also adopting key elements of the host culture. Their outcomes of satisfaction, happiness, and interaction with other groups is similar to the description of the integration type in Berry's (2005) acculturation model, which states, "when there is an interest in both maintaining one's heritage culture while in daily interactions with other groups, integration is the option" (p. 705). According to Berry (2005), those pursuing the integration strategy experience less stress and achieve better adaptations. Participant 010 was able to navigate the two cultures with ease, which brought her life satisfaction:

I always thank God for coming here... What made me adapt is the freedom I got. I felt free to prosper and go anywhere I want. I felt like a bird; free to fly anywhere. I have no restrictions to places as a woman and a head-covered woman. I have not been denied aid from the government or a job because of my hijab... I interact with others; greet and speak with other people and even smile and play with babies [smiling]. I am very comfortable here.

Some of the participants who seemed to be adapting to the new location appreciated its systems and services, and thus felt attached to the new place. Participant 006 said:

I passed the first year peacefully. Now I feel like through time I am getting attached to this place with its system and organization. I notice how different I am compared to the early period, when we just got here. I am used to this place and I feel I am part of this country, but still I miss my family.

Hybrid Positionality

Two of the participants encountered some moderate challenges. Their stories are typical of migrant experiences of dealing with difficulties, loss, changes in traditional values, and lack of family support. This group seemed to still be in a transitional stage; they neither wanted to go back nor wanted to remain in the new country.

These individuals demonstrated uneasiness in their experiences of living in the U.S. They expressed a lack of desire to interact with the hosting society. They experienced discomfort in some of the social interactions due to their apparent religious identity, as they wear the religiously prescribed head covering (hijab). Some felt guilty for accommodating people around them in a way that contradicts their religious teachings and values. Handshaking with men was problematic for Participant 009:

The only thing that embarrassed me is shaking hands. I was so embarrassed to reject a hand shake with classmates or professors. I don't shake hands with men who are not related by blood. I felt bad.

For some of these women, the biggest barrier was negotiating the common assumptions of non-Muslim individuals, particularly in healthcare and higher education, that their religion is oppressive and restrictive for women. Participant 009 shared an experience where she felt urged to explain her culture to the presenter:

I had an experience with a professor from Stanford University. He is a physicist, member in the Honor Society of Physics. He is eighty years old. His lecture was on a project taking place in Jordan and he is the principal investigator for it. During his lecture he mentioned the honor killing in Jordan and how women are killed by their parents if they have extramarital sexual relationships. I did not comment, but after the lecture I followed

him. I told him that what he said about the honor killing was right, but not the whole picture of women in Jordan. I told him that my parents encouraged me to go to graduate school and pursue my education in the United States.

They also felt that they no longer belonged to their old homeland. They were attached to their current comfort zone, which is their small network or Muslim enclave: family and the local Muslim community. They expressed their inability to return home because they adjusted to their lifestyle here, particularly to their independence and privacy. Participant 003 was concerned about returning to her place of origin and was critical of the new place and its people:

Going back to Libya worries me. Here we got used to privacy...People here are different. Both Arab and Americans are unpleasant like the weather. They are dry like the weather [laughing]. The place I go to the most is the mosque. You cannot go out in El Paso...there are no activities. Most of my socialization is at the mosque.

This group of women created a third space, which is their own. They live in between claims of the past and the needs of the present. Their identities appeared as an ongoing process, transformed by daily negotiations and interactions of hybridized subjectivities. Their daily lives in the new place were unstable and their identities had a shifting nature of diasporic identities (Bhabha, 2004; Brah, 2001; Gilroy, 2004; Hall, 2003).

Their living experiences in the U.S. put them in hybrid positionality, which Leona English (2004) described as a place where individuals negotiate identity and become neither this nor that, but rather their own. They expressed an intention to determine methods in the near future for adapting to the new place, thus pushing themselves out of their Muslim enclave. They were not satisfied with their current situation and clearly did not desire to go back, but they did not know what to do. They seemed to have ambivalent feelings about their current situation.

They were not satisfied with living in the U.S., but were also certain of their inability to live in their home country.

They were aware of the reality that living in the U.S. had changed their lifestyle, behavior, and attitude, but they were also aware that they were still not quite an integral part of the hosting society; they separated themselves from the hosting society. They appeared to be uncomfortable with this situation, and attempted to remove themselves from this hybrid stage. Participant 003 had planned to take steps in the future to be more engaged with the hosting society:

I am planning to take classes next year, not for a degree, such as culinary art classes and volunteer at next year. I want to participate in teaching children, insha'Allah (God willing). I want to have a role.

Looking at the experiences of these two participants through Berry's acculturation model, it is clear that they placed a value on maintaining their original culture, while at the same time avoiding interaction with "others," turning their back to involvement with other cultural groups and losing the feeling of belonging to their country of origin. This places them in the separation phase of the acculturation model. According to Berry (2005), those who choose the segregation strategy suffer moderate acculturative stress. In addition, women in this group demonstrated their belief in collective efficacy. According to Bandura (2002), collective efficacy is the belief in individual's shared values, and the ability to use resources and efforts as a group to achieve the desired collective outcomes. Some participants in the study considered the mosque and the Muslim community as the main resources to help themselves and their families meet their needs in the new location. Participant 003 stated:

I focused on bringing my children to the mosque to connect with children that share the same norms...I was so lonely at the beginning. It is so good to have friends who practice the same religion and from the same background. This is even better for my children. I consider Sunday is the most interesting day for me. On this day I bring my children to the Sunday school at the mosque. During this time I meet my friends. We talk about religious topics and general topics too. I ask them for information and guidance when I need anything. This helps me a lot.

Safety Through Invisibility

Seven of the participants demonstrated little interest in heritage cultural maintenance and in developing relationships with others. These participants wore the Islamic attire (head scarf and long dress), except for one. They demonstrated no interest in maintaining their own cultural heritage or engaging with that of the host society. When the researcher visited their homes to conduct the interviews, she noticed that they only spoke English with their children, children only had access to American television channels, and Islam was not apparent in the home environment, nor in the participant's description of a typical day.

Separated from relatives, these women experienced loneliness. They stated that their loneliness was due to living in isolated places where there were few Arab Muslims. They also mentioned that the absence of the family support intensely affected them. They shared stories from their past to illustrate the importance of family support. Each participant mentioned the support a woman receives when she gives birth or becomes ill in her home-country, where she has access to her own mother's endless care. Without this support, women expressed a deeper loneliness.

Participant 013 explained:

The hardest thing was when I had my son. I was alone without my family to support me [crying]. Hmm, my husband at that time had started his classes. I gave birth and did not have anyone to help me. But when I had my daughter in Libya, I had my mother, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law.

These women were not involved with anything beyond their family boundaries. They had minimal to no engagement with either the local Muslim community or the hosting (larger) community. They also experienced minor challenges such as housing, weather, and diet differences. They essentially acted like visitors and wanted to return to their native countries.

Participant 012 considered her life here temporary:

I see myself back home. I want to be in Jordan in my own house and among my family.

Here, you always feel you are unsettled; it is temporary.

Some participants also mentioned various experiences of cultural shock, rejection, and even discrimination. For instance, participant 005 encountered a difficult experience at the doctor's office that made her fear seeking healthcare services:

I went to a doctor. We waited so long. Finally it was my turn. The doctor came in and greeted me. He asked me about my health problem. Then he asked me for how long I had the symptoms. I told him for almost a month. After he examined me, he asked me where I was from. I told him from Morocco. He told me that he would transfer me to another place. When I asked about the reason, he said: "To be honest with you, I do not like Muslims."

Other experiences also created barriers for them to seek healthcare services:

During my first Pap smear test, as you know, it is so embarrassing for an Arab woman. I was so shy. I kindly asked the physician to give me some time. She was in a rush. I know

that I was wasting her time and time is money for doctors, but I couldn't do it. She was upset... Now when I get sick I treat myself. I brought with me a lot of medications. I brought medication for infections, flu, cold, etc.

Participant 012 also shared an experience of rejection that she and her daughter encountered:

When you go for shopping or to do groceries, you meet people who are nice but there are also those who reject you. They do not smile and make you understand that they do not want to deal with a Muslim. There are people who show you their dislike for your attire, mainly the hijab... They do not reply to your greeting. They even avoid looking at you. They make you feel their rejection to talk to a person who wears the hijab. They show it on their faces. Even my daughter who wears the hijab experiences this... students at her school always say ugly comments to her.

These negative experiences in addition to losing family ties contributed to tense relational outcomes with the host community. This alienated them not only from the hosting society, but also from what was familiar to them, including the social and religious affiliations. They chose marginalization as a strategy to avoid cultural conflict and to be safe. This group of women believed that their safety could be achieved through invisibility. They retreated from public life and even the local Muslim community. Participant 012 felt alienated not only from the larger community, but also from her own community:

Arabs or more specifically Libyans change and act like Americans. They meet with you once every two months or even a year. They act like Americans. They do not act like the way they used to be back in Libya. They do not care about you or exchange visits with you anymore. You come here alone with nothing with you. So you stay alone; it is hard. This group of women encountered cultural conflict in their daily lives, and they resolved

it by seeking little involvement in either culture. According to Berry's (2005) framework of acculturation, the process revolves primarily around social exchange and interaction. For example, dominant Culture A engages in cross-cultural contact with non-dominant Culture B, and consequent stress occurs within the non-dominant group because its members may become overwhelmed by the host society's dissimilar language, cultural norms, and behaviors. One participant described her inability to move beyond her feelings of isolation:

My situation is so bad. It is hard for me to laugh. I feel like time is passing and every day is the same. There is a lot of pressure on me and I can't do anything about it. I even feel like I have failed.... I do nothing. I seek nobody. I am just sad for being like this. I wish I am like the rest here. It seems I am not going to change.

Through describing their daily lives and their responses for "the typical activities they do for fun," it was clear that these women were vulnerable and suffered more acculturative stress than the others in the study. As discussed in Berry's (2005) illustration of the four strategies of acculturation and outcomes for each strategy, "when there is little interest in heritage cultural maintenance and little interest in having relations with others then marginalization is defined....marginalization is the most stressful" (p. 708). Participant 013 spent most of her time at home because she did not get along with other Arab women at the mosque and feared contact with the larger community due to previous uncomfortable experiences:

I need friendship here. I did not like the group of people here. Several times I experienced difficulties while doing my laundry. Most of the residents in this apartment are soldiers. Like when they saw me they were shocked, scared. They stared at me and then left. They looked at me as if I was an alien. It seemed that they had never seen a woman with hijab. Here I am afraid of soldiers because they might have been in Iraq or whatever and been

exposed to harsh experiences. I am afraid of them. I am not embarrassed or shy; I am just worried about my safety and life. I keep myself busy with reading on the net, the children and the house chores.

These women seemed unhappy, and it was clear that they were not adjusting to the new place, and their goal was to go back. Participant 007 expressed her eagerness to return to her home country:

Deep inside I wish I can go back to Morocco. It is the longing to my country. I miss my family; mom, dad, and... [crying].

Spiritual Growth and Family Bonding

Regardless of their life journeys and acculturation strategies, each of the participants in this study discussed their spirituality and relationship with their children. They highlighted the positive change in these two phenomena in their lives. Living in a different place, experiencing different cultural norms, lifestyles, behaviors, and attitudes, facing challenges, and the lack of supporting resources forced them to rely on their faith and religious practices as a relieving strategy. They shared that through their need for support and relief, they were able to re-examine their religion and view it from a different perspective. Back home, religion was practiced as a daily routine and taught through memorization in schools. Here, these women were able to pay attention to the meaning and essence of Islam. They emphasized that this had strengthened their faith, brought them solace, and made them more able to enjoy practicing their religion.

Participant 008 described how living in the U.S. helped her to explore her religion and recognize its essence:

Here, religion is done through understanding and being convinced. It is your choice to go to the mosque or not. Islam is everywhere and at all the times. In this country, my faith

and religion grew stronger. Many things helped me, but the thing that helps me the most is praying and asking God to empower me with morality and goodness. Al-hamdillah (Thank God). This is the best source for my strength. In Saudi Arabia, we did study religion. They made us memorize parts of the Qur'an but without understanding and examining the meaning... I never felt faith in Saudi Arabia. I was always searching for faith.

In addition, the absence of family support and a limited social network reshaped their relationships with their children and brought them closer. In their homeland, they were mothers caring for their families, enforcing discipline, and fulfilling the expectations of their gender roles and social duties. Also, the women discussed how cooking and cleaning were their only responsibilities in their native countries. They also described how some of the social duties in the Arabic tradition, such as exchanging visits and attending occasions, were a burden. Here, the change in lifestyle and the needs of the new place urged the whole family to work as a team and distribute the household chores. This change freed some daily time for the women to interact and engage with their children through spending quality time together. Participant 003 mentioned that life in America had brought her closer to her children and strengthened her relationship with them:

My children became closer to me here. Because they did not have friends here, they felt that we are both in need for each other. I am so happy for this. My daughters became closer to me. My oldest daughter, who is in college, is now like my sister. I feel like I either got younger like her or she has grown to be my age. Besides, my children did not appreciate my hard work before coming here. Now they recognize it and they are grateful. I am very happy for this.

Fear of the Future

Participants shared a fear of the future, regardless of their different life journeys, behaviors, and attitudes. They were scared of the unknown future regarding two aspects: life as an elderly woman and their children's norms, values, and religious devotion. Several participants discussed their anxiety regarding their children's religious identities. They were worried that over time their children would assimilate to the American society and lose their Islamic identity and devotion. Participant 006 stated:

The one thing that I am still worried about is the future of my children. I am scared. This country has different traditions, values and practices. My main fear is about my children's religion.

The 15 participants provided similar responses when asked "how they see their lives twenty years from now." The demands and expectations of the new place and the different norms and values between the participants' own culture and the hosting culture affected their attitudes toward the future. In particular, they were afraid of aging in this country. For them, once parents get old here, they are devalued, neglected, and left in a nursing home. They were worried that their children would do the same after living here for many years, and they were worried about their futures. They stated that they felt trapped; they could not go back home because their children would not go with them, and here they would not be surrounded by their children's love and care. Participant 007 stated that she was immensely worried about aging in this country. She wanted to spend her time in her home country to be surrounded by her parents and siblings, but at the same time she could not be away from her children:

Deep inside I wish I can go back to Morocco. But when I remember that I will be going back alone I change my mind [laughing]. This is a reality. I see it clearly. It is not easy.

Now I see how my mother-in-law lives in Morocco and all her children are abroad. She suffers a lot. When I was in Morocco and seeing my mother-in-law suffering, I always felt that one day I will go through the same thing. When one gets old she needs her children. When you are young your children need you. But with aging one needs her children.

The participants in this study also shared a similar feeling of fear regarding their children's future. They were afraid that their children would change over time, losing their inherited norms and values and their religious devotion. They believed that their children's adherence to Islam is not only their duty as Arab mothers, but also as Muslims. They were worried that their children would turn bad, which included not practicing Islam, showing their bodies, and committing the forbidden (drinking alcohol, eating pork, and adultery). They explained that thinking about the possibility of such a change in their children's behavior made them scared about the Judgment Day, since Allah (God) holds them accountable for their children's religious devotion. Participant 008's main concern was fulfilling her duty as a Muslim mother and raising her children to be good Muslims:

My main worries are about my children. I want them to practice their religion and be good people. My vision is to see my children older and they are always at the mosque. The most important things for me are religion and morals. Education comes next. I always calm myself through Du'a (praying and requesting assistance from God). I also work with them. I teach them what is right and what is wrong. This is my concern but I am confident that I am fulfilling my role and the rest is in God's hands. I believe in God and I am sure He won't disappoint me.

The participants in this study expressed their fear of the future, which revolved around change in their children's behaviors and attitudes. Even though they wanted a change for their children and wanted them to be in this country for opportunities and a better future, they still feared the idea of change in general. Their fear of the future is due to what Siegelman (1983) explained as the fear of the loss of the known, which is the giving up of a reality that has provided meaning in their lives.

Discussion

The research question, "What are the experiences of Arab Muslim women living in the U.S.?" provided insight into Arab Muslim women's needs in relation to functioning in the mainstream culture, use of resources or agencies, and the decisions they make that shape their current acculturation outcome.

The study's key findings were categorized into emergent themes of: 1) Coping and embracing the good, (2) Hybrid positionality, (3) Safety through invisibility, (4) Spiritual growth and family bonding, and (5) Fear of the unknown future. These themes were placed in a model titled "Arab Muslim Women's Life Journeys in the United States," and were also viewed through the lens of John Berry's acculturation model and social cognitive theory.

According to Berry (2005), acculturation occurs at the group and individual levels. At the group level, it involves changes in the social structures, institutions, and in cultural practices. At this level, the acculturation process depends on the orientation of the dominant society toward cultural diversity. At the individual level, it involves changes in the individual's attitudes and behaviors.

Complex Acculturation Experience

Arab Muslim immigrant women's acculturation experiences in the U.S. are clearly influenced by both group and individual factors, and are highly complex. For this population, acculturation at the group level has been affected by the American political involvement in the Islamic world, which has created a sense of fear and distrust. In addition, there are differences between the values and traditions of the Arab Muslim culture and those of the dominant culture of the U.S. As a result, Arab Muslim immigrants experience numerous challenges as they adapt to American culture. They draw a line between the public and the private, between the American and the Arab Muslim. Arab Muslims often socialize together in order to receive culturally appropriate advice and support, thus forming a communal bond (Kayyali, 2006). This situation is even more severe for Arab Muslim women. The Arab Muslim culture prescribes different gender roles that cause women to experience double standards. Lack of freedom and more restrictions are imposed on women due to the idea that they are anchor of the family's sense of identity and honor (Ajrouch, 1999). In addition, the main roles of women in the Arab Muslim culture include the maintenance of Arab culture and the embodiment of ethnic heritage. As a result, Arab Muslim women in the U.S. fear losing their identity and failing to fulfill their cultural duty; this makes them more likely to tightly embrace their rituals and traditions (Read, 2004). Arab Muslim women's experiences of navigating two different cultures reflect the intersection of national origin, gender, religion, and politics, thus creating a complex acculturation experience.

Using Berry's acculturation model to view the life journeys of Arab Muslim immigrant women suggests that researchers explore issues of identity formation of Arab Muslim immigrant women, cultural conflict, and their mental health needs. Marshall and Read (2003) studied the relationship between the ethnic and religious identities of Arab American women and feminist

orientations to determine whether a strong ethnic and religious identity undermined feminism. The researchers found that Arab identity was positively associated with feminism, while religious identity was inversely associated with feminist orientation. The findings of this study contradict those of Marshall and Read. Women's views, behaviors, and daily roles were not associated with their religious identities. The challenges they encountered at the beginning of their lives in the U.S. shaped their views and behaviors. Participants who seemed to be very religious, which was evident in their Islamic attire and their traditional religious practices were the heads of the household; through this role, they controlled the family finances and behaviors. They were decision-makers for their families, employed, strong, and engaged in the dominant society. The results of this study support the idea of the association between acculturation, stress, and mental health. Jadalla and Lee (2012) examined Arab Americans' physical and mental health and the relationship between their acculturation and health. The results indicated that higher attraction to the American culture indicated better mental health.

Stressors of adapting and integrating into American society are severe for Arab Muslim immigrant women. All of the participants stated that they cried and isolated themselves when the challenges were very harsh or too difficult to endure. Issues that emerged consistently in this study included loneliness, fear, and lack of support. Participants expressed concern about the loss of family support and relationships with their children, especially as they age. They feared that their children's values would change and they would not take care of their elderly parents. Arabs refute the idea of living in nursing homes, and they expect their children to provide them with love, respect, and care when they become old. These women were also afraid that in the future, their children would assimilate completely to the American culture and lose their religious identities and commitments.

Further qualitative research studies are needed to increase the knowledge and understanding of Arab Muslim women's needs in relation to functioning in the mainstream culture, use of resources or agencies, and the decisions they make that shape their acculturation outcomes. Studies that specifically identify strategies to support Arab Muslim women's identity would facilitate the successful navigation of dual cultures, and would also lessen the stress of a highly complex acculturation experience.

Limitations

Study limitations included limited religious heterogeneity in the sample and loss of cultural expression in translation to English, as certain Arabic words and sayings were difficult to translate.

Summary

This qualitative descriptive study explored Arab Muslim women's experiences of living in the U.S. Through the use of a demographic questionnaire, semi-structured, open-ended interviews, and participant observations, the researcher sought to answer the following research question and sub-questions:

1. What are Arab Muslim women's experiences of living in the U.S.?
2. How has life been for Arab Muslim immigrant women since immigrating to the U.S.?
3. How do Arab Muslim immigrant women describe their daily lives in the U.S.?
4. How do Arab Muslim immigrant women describe their cultural experiences?
5. Have Arab Muslim immigrant women's social networks changed since immigrating to the U.S.?
6. What do Arab Muslim immigrant women describe as their support system?

This is one of the few studies eliciting the views of Arab Muslim women on their living experiences in the U.S., mainly in the southwestern region. This qualitative descriptive study provides a narrative of Arab Muslim women's experiences, daily lives, challenges, feelings, and behaviors in America. Several themes emerged from the interviews, such as coping and embracing the good, hybrid positionality, safety through invisibility, spiritual growth, family bonding, and fear of the future. With regard to participants' adaptation to the host country and culture, the majority of the study participants felt alienated, unsettled, unhappy, and eager to return home. Religion and strong faith seemed to be the only resources participants utilized during difficult times. Of particular interest is the absence of the husband in their descriptions. Even though 14 of the participants were married, their husbands were not mentioned by any of them. Most of the participants did not seek the husband during difficult or leisure times. Their descriptions of their daily lives revolved around themselves and their children.

In conclusion, the findings of this study revealed that more than half of the participants seemed to be struggling to adapt to the American society, and each of them reported experiencing loneliness, sadness, stress, and fear. Further research is critically necessary to increase the knowledge of Arab Muslim immigrant women's needs and to provide insight for the design of future research studies that can inform and improve services for this population.

Article 2

Accessing the Hidden Population of Arab Muslim Immigrant Women in the United States

ABSTRACT

Background: Arab Muslim immigrant women represent a population that is very difficult to access, and this poses a significant challenge for researchers.

Purpose: This article presents the methodological issues and strategies of successfully accessing the hidden population of Arab Muslim immigrant women living in the U.S.

Methods: During a qualitative descriptive study of Arab Muslim immigrant women living in the U.S., the researcher's insider status allowed for the identification and use of strategies that were successful in accessing this hidden population.

Findings: Strategies related to (a) Accessibility and participation, (b) Data collection, and (c) The relationship between the researcher and the participants will be discussed.

Conclusion: This article presents the methodological issues and strategies of successfully accessing a hidden population yielded from a study of Arab Muslim immigrant women living in the U.S.

Accessing the Hidden Population of Arab Muslim

Immigrant Women in the United States

Arab Muslims in the U.S. are a hidden population. According to Heckathron (2002), a population is considered hidden when its size is unknown and there are strong privacy concerns, which lead to the reluctance of individuals to cooperate and participate in research. Because Arab Muslim immigrants in the U.S. are considered a hidden population, knowledge development related to this population in general, and women in particular, remains underdeveloped in many important areas. Little is known about women in the growing and diverse Arab American Muslim population, and there is little information available regarding their experiences after emigrating from their native countries. It is unknown how Arab Muslim women encounter other groups and the challenges of living in the U.S.; how they seek avenues for understanding and assistance; how they negotiate and compromise on their initial positions; and whether they achieve some degree of positive engagement.

Arab Muslim immigrants' health remains relatively understudied (Nasser-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003), as do the broader areas of adjustment and engagement with the healthcare system in the U.S. As an Arab-Muslim woman who splits her time between academia and community service in the southwestern region of the U.S., the researcher came face to face with challenges that may be encountered while working with Arab Muslim immigrant women. This article explores some of the difficulties in such research and offers some preliminary ideas on what can be done to overcome them. The purpose of this article is to share techniques and strategies I utilized as an insider researcher (an Arab Muslim immigrant woman) to reach the hidden population of Arab Muslim immigrant women and to address the challenges and obstacles I faced in conducting a qualitative study.

I will focus on the challenges I encountered in two areas in the study: the methods and the role of the researcher. I employed snowball and key-informant sampling methods. Aside from the sampling methods, the researcher plays an important role in research. The researcher can be an outsider or insider. Researchers who are interested in working with this population should not only be culturally competent, but also familiar with the potential challenges they may encounter.

My decision to work with this population was based on the strong need for an increased understanding of Arab Muslims in the U.S., particularly Arab Muslim women. Arab Muslim men have been studied, and their daily lives have been watched and examined for various reasons. Arab Muslim women have been invisible and their experiences in this society have been ignored. Many are living a life in silence with a sense of detachment and alienation from both societies, Arabic and American.

In addition, I share similar experiences with the participants. I am an Arab Muslim woman who immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 22. I came from Sidon, Lebanon with a husband and one child. While I was learning how to live in a new place, trying to establish my life, and adjusting to the needs and demands of the new culture, I was a full-time college student and had my second child. My daily life revolved around navigating several cultures and systems, including social, educational, and health. In the middle of all of this, my daughter was diagnosed with a critical illness. I had to drop out of school and move to another location in the U.S. because my daughter required an intensive health service at one of the major cancer treatment centers. During this period of my life, I had to take care of my infant son, sick daughter, re-establish my life, and battle major challenges while being alone without any support. The challenges did not only affect me, but many members of my family. My husband was forced to

stay away from us in order to keep his job and to be able to support us financially. After failing to locate supporting resources or groups for Arab women facing similar situations, I reached out to my parents in Lebanon. My father had to resign from his job in order to come to the U.S. to support us for an extended period of time. He had to learn and adopt new roles and behaviors to accommodate my harsh situation, such as caring for an infant, completing household chores, and providing transportation in a completely different environment. Later, I moved back to my house and reunited with my family. I had to restart my life again, but now with a different set of struggles. Aside from fulfilling my duties as a mother and locating educational and health services for my daughter, I was pursuing my master's degree and working part time. My continuous need to interact with healthcare providers and find resources for my daughter and myself as a caregiver allowed me to recognize the lack of resources to support Arab immigrant women and the difficulties and challenges they encounter in the U.S.

My experience motivated me to pursue a doctoral degree to be able to enhance my knowledge and skills for conducting research and to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the topic. In 2009, I was engaged in research in a health sciences program. My interest in learning more about other women who had similar experiences led me to investigate the literature, and I was able to find very little information. As a scholar, I took the opportunity to conduct research with a group of Arab Muslim immigrant women in order to be able to share their experiences with the public in hopes of creating increased awareness of the problems they encountered.

While conducting this research, I faced several obstacles in three methodological areas: (a) Accessibility and participation, (b) Data collection, and (c) The relationship between the

researcher and the participants. The following sections highlight the difficulties faced in each area and the employed strategies to ease the process of the research.

Accessibility and Participation

Flyers about the study in Arabic and English were posted in two places, first at the local Islamic Center in the lobby and the women's prayer room, and also at three Arab physicians' offices where the fliers were posted at the front desk. Although my name as the researcher on the flyer and the person to contact indicate that I am an Arab woman and demonstrate the fact that I have connections with the Islamic Center, recruiting participants was challenging. This approach of recruitment was unsuccessful.

My next step for recruitment was approaching these women at the Islamic center after the Friday prayer and discussing the study with them. Some women were suspicious of the research and were scared to even speak to me about it. When some women were willing to talk and be informed about the study, they asked many questions, thus reflecting their fear and distrust. This technique also did not help. I was forced to determine an effective method of recruitment. I brainstormed with my husband and some Arab friends. They recommended contacting one of the two well-known women in the local Arab Muslim community: a businesswoman and a recent immigrant woman who holds weekly gatherings for women at her house. As a result, I contacted the gatekeeper, a Palestinian Muslim recent immigrant who is a well-respected member of the local Muslim community. She headed numerous activities for Muslims, particularly Arabs. She is in her 40s and is a mother of five children. She held weekly gatherings at her home to provide support for recent Arab Muslim immigrant women. I met with the gatekeeper and explained the purpose of the study to her. I also provided her with an introduction letter and consent form for my study and expressed my interest in gaining participants. She then invited me to some of the

gatherings at her home in order to meet the attendees and inform them about the study. One of the attendees asked me if the Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI) were involved or would be able to retrieve their information. They all expressed equal fear because they or someone related to them had been interrogated by government agencies. Some of these women asked me why I was interested in conducting research with them.

Telling my own immigration story, sharing the experience of my daughter's illness and some of the difficulties I experienced, and the fact that the study was a requirement for graduation deflated some of their tension and suspicion. Other women wondered why I was doing this or, in other words, what I wanted to achieve. I told them that I wanted to provide scholarly space in the existing research for their voices. Instantly, two of the participants agreed to participate and chose to do the interview at the gatekeeper's home. This approach for recruitment was effective for reaching these women, addressing their fears, and making them more willing to participate, open up, and discuss their experiences. Some of the participants wanted to keep going in the interview, but I had to remind them about the time limit. Through telling my stories and sharing my own difficulties, I was also sharing my vulnerabilities. This brought me closer to them, and they were surprised and happy that I was not a detached researcher, but rather a woman who had suffered. One woman began to cry and hugged me because she was glad to be able to discuss her story.

Data Collection

The main source for the data collection for this study was the interviews. The study employed other sources for data collection in order to get a better idea of who the participants were and to generate rich descriptions of their experiences. A demographic questionnaire and observation (field notes) were utilized. Although the informed consent form emphasizes the

protection of participants' confidentiality, they were uncomfortable with filling out the questionnaire, having the interview audio-recorded, and having me take field notes. It was essential to explain in detail every step of data collection and how measures were planned to protect their confidentiality and to minimize any potential risks. I had to emphasize that only myself, as the principal investigator, would have access to the information, and that I would keep all identifying information confidential. I explained for these women that the data records would include an identification number with no identifying information, and that the confidentiality of electronic data would be maintained during collection through the use of personal identification numbers (PINs). Confidentiality was something I had to strongly emphasize, as well as how it would be strictly maintained throughout the study.

In order to build trust and make them comfortable with the methods I was using for data collection, I had to share with them the process of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the IRB's role in monitoring the research. I highlighted the policies and guidelines to be followed as a researcher in order to conduct and finish the study. The demographic questionnaire was designed to solicit basic information about the participants (name, age, ethnicity, place of origin, marital status), level of education, religious classification (practicing or non-practicing), and length of residency in the U.S. The questionnaire proved helpful in gaining a sense of who the participants were. They were reluctant at the beginning to complete the form, but after I explained for them that it would remain confidential and their name was not needed for the questionnaire, they eventually came around. The questionnaire was completed after they provided informed consent and before starting the interview. I proceeded to interview after verifying that the participant met the inclusion criteria based on information from the questionnaire.

I employed both the active and the moderate participatory observer role according to Spradley's criteria (1980) depending on the setting of the interview. Although I was familiar with many women in the Arab Muslim community and even more familiar with those involved in the religious gatherings, I employed an active observer role when the interview took place at the mosque. I conducted these interviews in the library there; it is a small, private room with bookshelves. We kept the door closed during the interview to maintain privacy.

At the mosque, I needed to follow the required dress code (covering the head and the whole body) and also performed some of the religious practices, such as praying and reading parts of the Quran. This is part of my life as a moderate Muslim, so I was comfortable carrying out these practices in order to engage with the participants to establish a common ground to connect on some level with this hidden population.

A moderate participatory observer role was also utilized when the interview took place either at the gatekeeper or the participant's home. In these two settings, I observed these women's interactions, clothes, and the actual setting itself, but I did not participate. I also observed each participant's interaction with her family in her home before going to a different room to begin the interview. I notified and explained to the participant what I was writing down. Through this type of observation, I noticed that these women were pushing their children to learn English. They spoke to them only in English and the television had American channels only. Each of the participants was wearing an Arabic traditional dress (abaya). Sometimes the children were there, and the women felt comfortable talking in front of them. In all of the interviews, the participants' husbands were not there. I was told that they were either at work or school because interviews were scheduled in the early afternoon.

Interviews

In qualitative research, the researcher has several choices for the type of the interview that best suits the study. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were the method employed for data collection. Because the participants in this study had unique stories to tell, semi-structured and open-ended interviews seemed best to establish the flow of inquiry. It was unlikely that any other approach would capture the depth of the participants' experiences. This type of interview granted the participants the flexibility of choice to focus on particular experiences and arrange the time sequence as they desired. Such flexibility was intended to enter the world of the participants in order to understand their realities and generate rich descriptions of their living experiences as Arab Muslim immigrant women in the U.S.

The women in this study were scared at the beginning to have their interviews audio-recorded. They were worried about their confidentiality. I did a mock interview with them where they asked me questions and audio-recorded it. Then they replayed the recorded material and noticed that there was nothing that identified me; this made the women feel more comfortable with being audio-recorded.

Relationship Between the Researcher and the Participants

The qualitative researcher's role is perhaps paradoxical and to some extent arduous. The researcher needs to be acutely focused on the experiences and meanings of the participants, while also being aware of their own pre-knowledge or preconceptions that might influence the rigor of the study. The membership role of a qualitative researcher is essential and receives much of discussion on whether the researcher's membership role improves or impedes the ability to carry out the study.

In my research with Arab Muslim immigrant women, I was an insider researcher sharing characteristics, roles, and experience under study with the participants. Such a role had its positives and negatives. First, being familiar with Arab traditions helped me to design a culturally sensitive study and successfully address any challenges that arose while working with these women. Despite the recruitment difficulties I faced at the beginning of the study, being an insider allowed me as a researcher to have more rapid and more complete acceptance by the women in the study. After I established the comfort and safety for the participants, they were open with me in sharing their experiences of living in the U.S., which allowed me to obtain a greater depth of the data gathered. My common background with the participants provided a level of trust and openness with them. They were willing to share their stories with me because they expected my understanding due to our shared experiences.

Even though this shared status was very beneficial as it afforded access, entry, and common ground from which to begin the research, it had some impact on me. On the one hand, I had to accommodate the participants as much as I could to reduce their fear and reluctance to participate. Such an approach urged me to put my personal preferences aside to get close to these women. As part of the Arabic social interchange, Arab women exchange kisses on the cheeks and like to sit close to each other. Also, when visiting an Arab home, the host is expected to greet the visitor in a most friendly and hospitable way. Food and coffee or tea are commonly served and viewed as socially obligatory. The visitor should accept the offer with gratitude and consume the food and the drink completely. I carefully followed all these traditions to establish a relationship of trust with the participants. Such familiarity with the participants' cultural traditions and accommodating an Arabic cultural context had impacted my role as the researcher. Creating a comfortable environment, rapport, and friendship put me in conflicting position. On

the one hand, the participants wanted to socialize with me after the interview, when they felt like they could interact and share more with me. They also expected me to offer help or service. Such an experience placed me in a space between. I allowed them to feel comfortable and close, but at the same time I had to follow the policies and regulations of conducting research. In order to address this arduous conflicting role, I heavily engaged in self-reflection to stay aware of my own personal perspective and to control the impact of the conflicting roles: insider and outsider.

Summary

Accessing hard-to-reach populations is a significant challenge for researchers. There are various sampling methods to recruit hidden populations. This article presents the methodological issues and strategies of successfully accessing a hidden population yielded from a study of Arab Muslim immigrant women living in the U.S.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Ras, W. (2003). Barriers to services for Arab immigrant battered women in a Detroit suburb. *Social Work Research and Evaluation*, 4(1), 49–66. Retrieved from <http://www.naswpress.org/publications/journals/swr.html>
- Abu-Ras, W., & Abu-Bader, S. H. (2009). Risk factors for depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD): The case of Arab and Muslim Americans post 9-11. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 7(4), 393-418. doi:10.1080/15562940903379068
- Ahmed, L. (1992). *Women and gender in Islam*. London, England: Yale University Press.
- Ajrouch, K. (1999). Family and ethnic identity in an Arab-American community. In M. Suleiman (Ed.), *Arabs in America: Building a new future*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Ajrouch, K. J. (2000). Place, age, and culture: Community living and ethnic identity among Lebanese American adolescents. *Small Group Research*, 31, 447-469. Retrieved from <http://www.sagepub.com/healeystudy5/articles/Ch10/Place,age,andculture.pdf>
- Amer, M., & Hovey, J. (2005). Examination of the impact of acculturation, stress, and religiosity on mental health variables for second-generation Arab Americans. *Ethnicity & Disease*, 15(1), 111-121. Retrieved from http://www.ishib.org/wordpress/?page_id=39
- Amer, M., & Hovey, J. (2007). Socio-demographic differences in acculturation and mental health for a sample of 2nd generation / early immigrant Arab Americans. *Journal of Immigrant Minority Health*, 9(4), 335–347. doi:10.1007/s10903-007-9045-y
- American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. (2011). *Legal advocacy and policy review*. Retrieved from <http://www.adc.org>
- Aprahamian, M., David M. Kaplan, Amy M. Windham, Judith A. Sutter Jan Visser.

- (2011). The relationship between acculturation and mental health of Arab Americans. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 23(2), 80-92. doi:10.1177/1043659611434058
- Arab American National Museum. (2008). *Arab American National Museum*. Retrieved from <http://www.arabamericanmuseum.org/>
- Arab American National Museum. (2011). *Arab American National Museum*. Retrieved from <http://www.arabamericanmuseum.org/>
- Bahi, R. (2011). Islamic and secular feminisms: Two discourses mobilized for gender justice. *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, 3(2), 138-158. Retrieved from <http://www.contemporaryscienceassociation.net/journal/view/1151>
- Bandura, A. (2002). Social cognitive theory in cultural context. *Applied Psychology*, 51(2), 269-290. doi:10.1111/1464-0597.00092
- Beny, J. W., & Kim, U. (1988). Acculturation and mental health. In P. Dasen, J. W. Berry, and N. Sortarious (Eds.), *Health and cross-cultural psychology: Towards applications* (pp. 207-236). London: Sage Publications.
- Berry, J. W. (1980). Acculturation as variables of adaptation. In A. M. Padilla (Ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, models, and some new findings*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Berry, J. W. (1986). Acculturation attitudes of Korean immigrants in Toronto. In I. Reyes Lagunes and Y. H. Poortinga (Eds.), *From a different perspective: Studies of behavior across cultures* (pp. 93-105). Lisse, Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46(1), 5-68. Retrieved from <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic1230903.files/immigrationacculturtion%20Reading.pdf>

- Berry, J. W. (2001). A psychology of immigration. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(3), 615–663.
doi:10.1111/0022-4537.00231
- Berry, J. W. (2003). Conceptual approaches to acculturation. In K. M. Chun, P. B. Organista, and G. Marín (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, & applied research* (pp. 17-37). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(6), 697-712. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.07.013
- Berry, J. W., & Annis, R. C. (1974). Acculturation and stress: The role of ecology, culture, and differentiation. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 5, 382-406. Retrieved from <http://jcc.sagepub.com/>
- Berry, J. W., Kim, U., Minde, T., & Mok, D. (1987). Comparative studies of acculturative stress. *International Migration Review*, 21(3), 490-511. Retrieved from [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1747-7379](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1747-7379)
- Berry, J. W., Poortinga, Y. H., Segall, M. H., & Dasen, P. R. (2002). *Cross-cultural psychology*. United Kingdom: University Press, Cambridge.
- Bhabha, H. (1990). The third space: Interview with Homi Bhabha. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 207–21). London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Brittingham, A., & De la Cruze, P. (2005). *We the people of Arab Ancestry in the United States*. U. S. Census Bureau, Special Report, 2000. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/censr-21.pdf>
- Bryman, A. (2011). The debate about quantitative and qualitative research: A question of method or epistemology? *The British Journal of Sociology*, 50(1), 75-92. Retrieved from <http://www.lse.ac.uk/BJS/home.aspx>

- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1994). *Research methods in education* (4th ed.). London: Routledge.
- Crotty, M. (2003). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- El-Saadawi, N. (1993). Women and sex. In D. L. Bowen and E. A. Early (Eds.), *Everyday life in the Muslim Middle East* (pp. 81-83). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Faragallah, M., & Webb, F. (2003). Acculturation of Arab-American immigrants: An exploratory study. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 28(3), 95-405. Retrieved from <http://soci.ucalgary.ca/jcfs/>
- Feldman, K. (2006). The (Il) legible Arab body and the fantasy of national democracy. *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 31(4), 33-53. doi:10.1093/melus/31.4.33
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Haboush, K. L. (2007). Working with Arab American families: Culturally competent practice for school psychologists. *Psychology in the Schools*, 44(2), 183–198. doi:10.1002/pits.20215
- Haddad, Y. (1997). Make some room for Muslims? In W. H. Conser, Jr., and S. B. Twiss (Eds.), *Religious diversity and American religion history* (pp. 218–261). Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Haddad, Y. (2011). *Becoming American? The forging of Arab and Muslim identity in pluralist America*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.
- Hassoun, R. (1999). Guide to Arab culture: Health care delivery to the Arab American community. *Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services*, 7, 1-38.

- Retrieved from
http://www.accesscommunity.org/site/DocServer/health_and_research_cente_21.pdf
- Heckathorn, D. D. (2002). Respondent driven sampling, II: Deriving population estimates from chain-referral samples of hidden populations. *Social Problems*, 49(1), 11-34. Retrieved from <http://www.respondentdrivensampling.org/reports/RDS2.pdf>
- Henry, H. M., Biran, M. W., & Stiles, W. B. (2005). Construction of the perceived parental acculturation behaviors scale. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62(3), 293-297.
doi:10.1002/jclp.20228
- Herlihy, B., & McCollum, V. (2003). Feminist theories. In D. Capuzzi and D. R. Gross (Eds.), *Counseling and psychotherapy: Theories and intervention*. Mahwah, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall..
- Hikmet, J., Mohamed F., Hakim-Larson, J., Talib, K., Husam A., & Adnan, H. (2007). Mental health symptoms in Iraqi refugees: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, and depression. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 14(1), 19-25. Retrieved from <http://www.tuckerpublish.com/jcd.htm>
- Ibish, H. (2003). Analysis: Experience of Arab Americans since 9/11. *National Public Radio*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/programs/totn/transcripts/2003/mar/030311.ibish.html>
- Ibrahim, M. (2001). *Arab Muslims*. Retrieved from http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/ibrahim_arab_muslims.pdf
- Jadalla, A., & Lee, J. (2012). The relationship between acculturation and general health of Arab Americans. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 23(2), 159-165.
doi:10.1177/1043659611434058

- Kayyali, R. (2006). *The Arab Americans*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Kayyali, R. (2013). U. S. Census classifications and Arab Americans: Contestations and definitions of identity markers. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39(8), 1299-1318. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2013.778150
- Keesing, R. (1974). Theories of culture. *Annual Review Anthropology*, 3, 73-97. Retrieved from <http://luci.ics.uci.edu/websiteContent/weAreLuci/biographies/faculty/djp3/LocalCopy/annurev.an.03.100174.000445.pdf>
- Kim, M. (2009). The political economy of immigration and the emergence of transnationalism. *Journal of Human Behavior & the Social Environment*, 19(6), 759-771. doi:10.1080/10911350902910849
- Kim, B. S. K., & Abreu, J. M. (2001). Acculturation measurement: Theory, current instruments, and future directions. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casa, L. Suzuki, and C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (2nd ed., pp. 394-424). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lee, C. (2009). Sociological theories of immigration: Pathways to integration for U.S. immigrants. *Journal of Human Behavior & the Social Environment*, 19(6), 730-744. doi:10.1080/10911350902910906
- Lipson J. G., & Meleis, A. I. (1983). Issues in health care of Middle Eastern patients. *The Western Journal of Medicine*, 139, 854-861. Retrieved from <http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=nrs>
- Mairson. (2005). Muslims in America. *National Geographic*, 207(2), 2. Retrieved from

- <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/>
- Marshall, S., & Read, J. (2003). Identity politics among Arab-American women. *Social Science Quarterly*, 84(4), 875-891. doi:10.1046/j.0038-4941.2003.08404015.x
- Mays, N. G. (2003). *Muslim students at an American university: A postmodern ethnography in new millennium*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/dissertations/AAI3089753>
- McConnell-Henry, T. (2009). Researching with people you know: Issues in interviewing. *Contemporary Nurse*, 34(1), 2–9. Retrieved from <http://www.contemporarynurse.com/>
- McLellan, E., MacQueen, K. M., & Neidig, J. L. (2003). Beyond the qualitative interview: Data preparation and transcription. *Field Methods*, 15, 63. Retrieved from <http://web.utk.edu/~cdavis80/documents/qual/McLellan%20et%20al%202003.pdf>
- Myers, H., & Rodriguez, N. (2003). Acculturation and physical health in racial and ethnic minorities. In K.M. Chun, P. B. Organista, and G. Marin (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research* (pp. 163-185). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Naber, N. (2000). Ambiguous insiders: an investigation of Arab American invisibility. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23(1), 37-61. doi:10.1080/014198700329123
- Nassar-McMillan, S. C., & Hakim-Larson, J. (2003). Counseling considerations among Arab Americans. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 81, 150-159. Retrieved from <http://psy6129.alliant.wikispaces.net/file/view/Nassar-McMillan-Hakim-Lason%202004.pdf/32619869/Nassar-McMillan-Hakim-Lason%202004.pdf>
- Non-Profit Islamic Information Center. (2010). *What is the IIC?* Retrieved from <http://islamicinformationcenter.org/about/>

- Norris, P., & Inglehart, F. (2012). Muslim integration into western cultures: Between origins and destinations. *Political Studies*, 60, 228-251. Retrieved from http://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/4481625/Norris_MuslimIntegration.pdf?sequence=1
- Nydell, K. (1987). *Understanding Arabs: A guide for Westerners*. Bangor, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Randa, K. (2013). U. S. Census classifications and Arab Americans: Contestations and definitions of identity markers. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39(8), 1299-1318. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2013.778150
- Read, J. (2004a). Family, religion, and work among Arab-American women. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(4), 1042-1050. Retrieved from <http://worldroom.tamu.edu/Workshops/ArabAmerican07/ArabAmericanStudies/Family%20Religion%20and%20Work%20Among%20Arab%20American%20Women.pdf>
- Read, J. (2004b). Cultural influences on immigrant women's labor force participation: The Arab-American case. *International Migration Review*, 38(1), 52-77. Retrieved from [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1747-7379](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1747-7379)
- Reimann, J. O., Rodriguez-Reimann, D. I., Ghulan, M., & Beylouni, M. F. (2007). Health issues in the Arab American community. Project Salaam: Assessing mental health needs among San Diego's greater Middle Eastern and East African communities. *Ethnicity and Disease*, 17(2) 3-41. Retrieved from <http://www.ishib.org/ED/journal/17-2s3/ethn-17-02-s3-39.pdf>
- Sandelowski, M. (1986). The problem of rigor in qualitative research. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 8(3), 27-37. Retrieved from <http://journals.lww.com/advancesinnursingscience/pages/default.aspx>

- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing and Health*, 23, 334-340. Retrieved from <http://www.wou.edu/~mcgladm/Quantitative%20Methods/optional%20stuff/qualitative%20description.pdf>
- Siegelman, E. (1983). *Personal risk*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Spradley, J. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Suleiman, M. (1999). *Arabs in America: Building a new future*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Suleiman, M. (2001). Image making of Arab Americans: Implications for teachers in diverse settings. *California Association for Bilingual Education*, 34, 1-24. Retrieved from <http://www.bilingualeducation.org/>
- Tuhiwai, S. L. (2006). Choosing the margins: The role of research in indigenous struggles for social justice. In N. G. Denzin and M. Giardina (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry and the conservative challenge*. London, England: Left Coast Press.
- U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2008). *U.S. international trade in goods and services* (Report No. CB08-121, BEA08-37, FT-900). Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/Press-Release/2008pr/06/ftdpress.pdf>
- van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Wrobel, N., Farrage, M., & Hymes, R. (2009). Acculturative stress and depression in an elderly Arabic sample. *Journal of Cross Cultural Gerontol*, 24(3), 273-290.
doi:10.1007/s10823009-9096-8

Zogby, J. (2001). *What ethnic Americans really think: The Zogby culture polls*. Washington, DC:
Zogby International.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

Office of the Vice President for Research and Sponsored Projects

Institutional Review Board

El Paso, Texas 79968-0587

phone: 915 747-8841 fax: 915 747-5931

FWA No: 00001224

DATE: March 11, 2013

TO: Maissa Khatib

FROM: University of Texas at El Paso IRB

STUDY TITLE: [435011-2] Arab Muslim Women's Experiences of Living in the United States:
A Qualitative Descriptive Study

IRB REFERENCE #: 435011-2

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: March 11, 2013

EXPIRATION DATE: March 11, 2014

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. University of Texas at El Paso IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This study has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant.

Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document. Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after termination of the project.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact Athena Fester at (915) 747-8841 or afester@utep.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Appendix B: Research Proposal

- I. Title:** Arab Muslim Women's Experiences of Living in the United States: A Qualitative Descriptive Study
- II. Investigators (co-investigators):** Maissa Khatib, Principal Investigator
PhD Student
UTEP (Health Sciences): Interdisciplinary Health Sciences PhD Program, College of Health Sciences
- Dr. Leslie Robbins, Co-Investigator

III. Hypothesis, Research Questions, or Goals of the Project

The aim of this qualitative descriptive study is to describe the experiences of Arab Muslim women living in the United States. This study will provide information about Arab Muslim women's experience since immigrating to the U.S. and provide understanding of what living in this new environment means to them.

This description of living in the U.S. will allow the researcher to examine the experience by entering the world of the person and interpreting the meaning from the view point of the participant assigns to the experience (McConnell-Henry, 2005). For such a study and purpose, a qualitative descriptive research will be the most appropriate design to answer the research question: "What are the experiences of Arab Muslim women living in the U.S.?" In addition, this study's main goal is to describe the daily life of Arab Muslim women, thereby providing a window into the individual life and concerns described through their own voices and perspectives. This information may increase our knowledge and understanding of Arab Muslim women's needs and provide insight to use in the design of future research studies about the health services for this population. The results of this study may increase cultural sensitivity of health care providers interacting with this population.

IV. Background and Significance

Arab Muslim immigrants are one group within the American Muslim population that are underrepresented and sometime appear to be invisible. There is a scarcity in research on addressing the needs of Arab Muslim women in the U.S. or the examination of their immigration experiences through the telling of their own stories. Although research should be equitable, the purpose of this study is to describe Arab Muslim women's experience of living in the U.S. due to the scarcity in research on addressing the needs of Arab Muslim women in the U.S. or the examination of their immigration experiences through the telling of their own stories.

The term Arab is a classification based largely on common language (Arabic) and a shared sense of geographic, historical and cultural identity. The total population of the Arab world is approximately 300 million in 22 nations (Arab American Institute Foundation [AAIF], 2002). Despite the national borders arbitrarily drawn between the Arab countries in the post-colonial period, Arabs continue today to view themselves as a unified entity regardless of current political and geographical separation. "Despite this diversity, Arab Americans feel connected through common values and cultural heritage which give them their shared identity" (Arab American National Museum, "Arab Americans: an Integral Part of American Society", 2011).

Arab Americans are Arabic speaking people, who were born in an Arab country and immigrated to the United States, or whose parents were born in an Arab country and who therefore consider themselves of Arabic origin (American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 2002). Arab Americans are heterogeneous but share, to a certain extent, similar cultural backgrounds based on linguistic and geographic commonality. They constitute a population that has been growing in the past years. They increased from 610,000 in 1980 to 860,000 in 1990 which is 41 percent in the 1980s and 38 percent in the 1990s (Brittingham & de la Cruz, 2005).

According to the Arab American Institute Foundation, there are four million Arab Americans and Muslims that comprise 25-30% of the Arab American community today (2008). During the sixties, there was an influx of Arab families' immigration to the U.S. (Kayyali, 2006). Due to this, the number of Arab women in the U.S. has increased with 1.12/1 male to female ratio (Arab American Yearbook, 2008).

There are many misconceptions regarding this population, for example some people believe that Arab Muslims come from the Middle East including non-Arab countries like Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey. Another example is that many people perceive Muslims as one homogenous group that is conservative and traditional. In order to understand the background of the participants in this study, it is essential to discuss who Arab Muslim American women are.

Arab Muslim women exhibit a diverse religious and ethnic group. A significant number are secular, others are traditional and some practice Islam to some degree in their homes. Their life styles and practices vary depending on the way they identify themselves (Arab, Muslim, Arab American, Muslim American, or American), their integration process and their political views. Arab Muslim women in the United States share commonalities and differences in their daily lives and belief systems. Little is known about women in the growing and diverse Arab American Muslim population and there is little information available about the experience of Arab Muslim women after emigrating from their native countries.

There are various factors shaping the lives of Arab Muslim women in the United States. First, the American international policy and its involvement in the Middle East have been intensively impacting the American media producing a negative representation of Arab/Muslim Americans. In addition, September 11, 2001 attacks, the wars on

Afghanistan and Iraq have been intensifying explicit and implicit negative images and perceptions of Arabs and Muslims.

Second, there is a strong and complex relationship between immigration and health. Moving from one place to another place embodies challenges and difficulties that affect immigrants in numerous areas: financially, physiologically and psychologically. According to Lipson, immigration can affect life and health on every level: "Migration affects health directly at the biological level via dietary changes, differences in local pathogens, lack of appropriate immunity, and through the risk of accidents in new situations" (1983).

Third, migration is a difficult process and can be a very stress-inducing experience, one that can lead to various social and mental health issues ranging from social isolation and adjustment limitations to depression and anxiety (Norris & Inglehart, 2012). The psychological effect of migration is immense. For instance, the process of acculturation can lead to either positive or negative outcomes. When positive psychological adaptation occurs, the acculturating person develops a clear identity, strong self-esteem and positive mental health. Negative adaptation leads to anomie, identity confusion, and anxiety (Amer & Hovey, 2007).

The aim of this qualitative descriptive study is to describe the experiences of Arab Muslim women living in the United States. This study will provide information about Arab Muslim women's experience since immigrating to the U.S. and provide understanding of what living in this new environment means to them. sensitivity of health care providers interacting with Arab Muslim This information may increase our knowledge and understanding of Arab Muslim women's needs and provide insight to use in the design of future research studies about the health services for this population. The results of this study may increase cultural population.

V. Research Method, Design, and Proposed Statistical Analysis

A qualitative descriptive design will be used in this study. The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of Arab Muslim women living in the U.S to produce a straightforward description of the phenomenon in their everyday vocabulary (Sandelowski, 2000).

This description of living in the U.S. will allow the researcher to examine the experience by entering the world of the person and interpreting the meaning from the view point of the participant assigns to the experience (McConnell-Henry, 2005). For such a study and purpose, a qualitative descriptive research design will be the most appropriate approach to answer the research question: "What are Arab Muslim women's experiences of living in the U.S.? The focus of the study will remain on the meanings participants assign to the experience.

Semi-structured interviews will be the method used to collect data. The study will recruit a community sample of Arab Muslim women. Participants will be interviewed

after signing the informed consent form. Arabic interpretation or translation will be offered if needed. Participant's involvement will require one (1) interview lasting one to two hours.

The grand research question for this qualitative descriptive study is "What are Arab Muslim women's experiences of living in the United States?" The following questions are examples of probes to be used:

- (1) Tell me about your life since immigrating to the U.S.?
- (2) What is it like to live in the U.S.?
- (3) Has your social network changed since immigrating to the U.S.?
- (4) Can you describe your relationship with others?
- (5) What kinds of activities do you do on a typical day? How do you spend your time?

The audio recorded material will be transferred to verbatim by a professional transcriptionist. The transcribed material will then be reviewed and compared with the audio tapes for accuracy by the researcher. Following this step, the researcher will read and reread the transcripts identifying patterns and then patterns will be placed into categories which will then be used to identify themes. Data analysis will be produced through the theoretical lens of constructivism and Islamic Feminism.

Data collection

Data collection will be achieved through interviews. The interviews will be semi-structured with open-ended questions. These interviews will be audio recorded. Location and time of the interview will be selected by the participant. Interviews will be the only method to be utilized for this study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study entails preparation of the data for analysis, several reexaminations of data to move deeper into understanding data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data. The researcher will build patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up implementing an inductive process with a focus on learning the meaning the participants hold. Data analysis in this qualitative descriptive study will generate in-depth, rich data that is less able to be generalized (Creswell, 2009). The analysis will be conducted through the lens of Islamic Feminism.

VI. Human Subject Interactions

A. Participants

Participants for this descriptive study include a community purposeful sample of 15-20 Arab Muslim women residing in the U.S. The participants are limited to Arab Muslim immigrant women due to the focus of the topic being researched. The proposed sample size is determined by saturation. Saturation in qualitative research may be reached with fewer participants and will be reflected when the information obtained becomes redundant (Creswell, 2009). The criteria for selection involve a community purposeful sampling of female, Arab Muslim, older than 21 years of age, residing in the U.S. for 2-6 years. The study will exclude Arab Muslim women who are unable to verbally communicate. Participants may be monolingual (Arabic speakers) or bilingual (Arabic and English speakers). Participants will be provided Arabic translated version of the eligibility survey and the informed consent form. Participant's involvement will start after signing the informed consent form and end after the submission of the manuscript.

B. Describe the procedures for the recruitment of the participants.

Flyers in Arabic and English will be distributed in the community, mainly in the areas that are populated by these women. If the participant agrees to take part in this study, the participant will contact the researcher to select the time and the place of the interview.

C. Describe the procedure for obtaining informed consent.

The researcher will ask the participant first to read the informed consent form and make sure that all parts of the form are clear to the participant. Then the participant will sign the informed consent form. The informed consent form is attached to this document (See appendix A).

D. Research Protocol

Data collection in this study will be narrations of experiences of Arab Muslim women. Participants will be individually interviewed. Participant's involvement will require one (1) interview lasting one to two hours. Time and place of the interview will be selected by the participant. Interviews will be based on a protocol, which assures that the grand question is addressed without exercising excessive control over the respondent (See Appendix B). Standard probing will be used for verification purposes guiding respondents to provide more details. The main data material will be audio-recorded interviews.

E. How will you protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants?

The recordings (data) will not use identifiers. The researcher will protect the privacy and the confidentiality of the participant by editing any portion of the recordings that contains any identifier. The recordings will be identified with a code specific to each participant. Only the PI and the Co-PI will have access to the information of the participant's identity and code. Participant's name will not be used when data from this study are published. Every effort will be made to keep research records, and other

personal information confidential.

F. Discuss the procedures that will be used to maintain the confidentiality of the research data.

The identity of the participant, the study ID, and the recordings will be kept confidential by the principal investigator (PI) in a secured cabinet in the PI's office at the University of Texas at El Paso. Collected forms (demographic survey and Informed consent form) will be transported to the PI's office that only the PI will have access to. Any problems detected will be discussed and taken care of by the principal investigator. Research data, including the primary verbatim (transcripts) will be retained for a sufficient period to allow analysis and dissemination. Seven years is specified by the Federal Government (http://www.ori.dhhs.gov/documents/FR_Doc_05-9643.shtml) as the minimum period of retention (www.nih.gov).

G. Please describe your research resources. Discuss the staff, space, equipment, and time necessary to conduct research and how these needs are met.

No external funding is provided for this study. All expenses will be covered by the PI.

VII. Describe any potential risks (physical, psychological, social, legal, or other) and assess their likelihood and seriousness.

Potential risks to subjects in this study are considered to be no greater than minimal. There are some potential risks and discomfort involved in the study such as recalling difficult situations or talking about a sensitive experience. A referral list for various mental health care services/facilities will be provided to the participant.

The PI is prepared for the occurrence of anticipated or unanticipated adverse event. In this study we will use the FDA definition of serious adverse events (SAEs). SAEs will be systematically assessed prior to the interview. Any SAE, whether or not related to the study, will be reported to the IRB. In the event that a participant either withdraws from the study or the investigator decides to discontinue a participant due to SAE or any other health issues, the participant will be referred to a health care provider. A summary of SAEs, withdrawal and discontinuation will be included in the annual progress report to IRB.

In case a participant feels uncomfortable and/or frustrated, she will be instructed to stop and will be immediately referred to the appropriate medical provider. Such a situation will be immediately reported within 24 hours of happening of the event via email to IRB followed by a written report within 10 working days. The other risk is breach of subject's privacy and confidentiality. Research team will take extreme measures to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality. The PI will keep all

identifying information confidential. The data records will include an identification number and no identifying information. All data will be locked. Confidentiality of electronic data will be maintained during collection through the use of PINs (personal identification numbers). Confidentiality will be strictly maintained throughout the study.

The University of Texas at El Paso and its affiliates do not offer to pay for or cover the cost of medical treatment for research related illness or injury. No funds have been set aside to pay or reimburse you in the event of such injury or illness.

- VIII.** Describe and assess the **potential benefits** to be gained by participants (if any) and the benefits that may accrue to society in general as a result of the planned work. Discuss the risks in relation to the anticipated benefits to the participants and to society.

There will be no direct benefits to be gained by participants but this description of living in the U.S. will allow the researcher to examine the experience by entering the world of the person and interpreting the meaning from the view point of the participant assigns to the experience (McConnell-Henry, 2005). This study's main goal is to describe the daily life of Arab Muslim women, thereby providing a window into the individual life and concerns described through their own voices and perspectives. This information may increase our knowledge and understanding of Arab Muslim women's needs and provide insight to use in the design of future research studies about the health services for this population. The results of this study may increase cultural sensitivity of health care providers interacting with the population.

- IX.** Indicate the specific **sites or agencies involved in the research project** besides The University of Texas at El Paso.

The Agent research is The University of Texas at El Paso. No other agencies are involved in the research project. The PI has the resources and facilities to conduct proposed research.

- X.** If the project has had or will receive **review by another IRB**, indicate this.

This study will be reviewed by The University of Texas at El Paso IRB only.

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer

Dear Prospective Participant:

My name is Maissa Khatib and I am a doctoral student at the University of Texas at El Paso. I am currently conducting a study to examine Arab Muslim women's experience of living in the U. S. for 2-6 years.

I am interested in their stories of residing in the U.S. I would like to invite you to participate in this study by contacting me to schedule a meeting for an interview.

You can contact me at (915) 256-3456, mkhatib@utep.edu, or www.facebook.com/maissak73

Time and place will be selected at your convenience.

Please feel free to forward this information to other Arab Muslim women who may be interested to participate in this study.

Thank You (Shukran),

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer (Arabic Version)

عزيزتي المشاركة المرتقبة :

اسمي ميساء خطيب. أنا طالبة في جامعة تكساس في الباسو حيث أدرس العلوم الصحية للحصول على الدكتوراه. أعمل حالياً على بحث عن المرأة العربية المسلمة وتجربتها في العيش في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية.

أنا مهتمة بقصص وتجارب عيش المرأة العربية المسلمة ولذلك أدعوك للاشتراك في هذا البحث. يمكنك الاتصال بي لتحديد موعد عبر التلفون:

(٩١٥)٢٥٦-٣٤٥٦

أو البريد الإلكتروني: mkatib@utep.edu

أو موقع الفيس بوك: facebook.com/maissak73

يمكنك تحديد الوقت والمكان المناسبين لك.

أرجو أن لا تتردد في تقديم هذه المعلومات لأي امرأة عربية مسلمة تحب أن تشارك في هذا البحث.

شكراً

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Title: Arab Muslim Women's Experience of Living in the United States: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

Principal Investigator: Maissa Khatib, UTEP PhD Student

UTEP (Health Sciences): Interdisciplinary Health Sciences PhD
Program, College of Health Sciences

Co-Investigator: Leslie Robbins, PhD

1. Introduction

You have been asked to take part voluntarily in the research project described below. Please take your time making a decision and feel free to discuss it with your friends and family. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read the consent form that describes the study. Please ask the study researcher to explain any words or information that you don't clearly understand. Feel free to ask for Arabic interpretation whenever needed.

2. Why is this study being done?

You have been asked to take part in a research study of Arab Muslim women living in the U.S. The Arab population in the U.S. has been rapidly growing over the past thirty years, little, if any, has been done to address their needs. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to describe the experiences of Arab Muslim women living in the U.S. Participants for this study are Arab Muslim women 21 years of age or older including a community sample of Arab Muslim women. Arabic interpretation or translation will be offered if needed. Participant's involvement will require one (1) interview lasting 60-120 minutes. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an Arab Muslim immigrant woman residing in the U.S.

3. What is involved in the study?

If you agree to take part in this study, the researcher will ask you to read and sign the informed consent form and participate in 1-2 hours interview. The interview will be done in one meeting.

4. What are the risks and discomforts of the study?

There are no known risks associated with this research.

5. What will happen if I am injured in this study?

The University of Texas at El Paso and its affiliates do not offer to pay for or cover the cost of medical treatment for research related illness or injury. No funds have been set aside to pay or reimburse you in the event of such injury or illness. You will not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You should report any such injury to Maissa Khatib at (915)747-7031 and to the director of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915) 747-8841 or irb.orsp@utep.edu

6. Are there benefits in taking this study?

There will be no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study, but this research gives voice to Arab Muslim women for telling their stories of living in the U.S., which will provide potential information to help increase understanding Arab Muslim women's perspectives and needs.

7. What other options are there?

You have the option not to take part in this study. There will be no penalties involved if you choose not to take part in this study.

8. Who is paying for this study?

No internal or external funding. Study supported by PI.

9. What are my costs?

There are no direct costs. You will be responsible to commute to and from the assigned place/site for the study or any other incidental expenses.

10. Will I be paid to participate in this study?

No incentive for taking part in this research study. Refreshments will be provided during the interview. A \$20 gift card to Wal-Mart will be provided to each participant at the end of the interview session.

11. What if I want to withdraw or asked to withdraw from this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study. If you do not take part in the study, there will be no penalty.

If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. However, we encourage you to talk to a member of the research group so that they know why you are leaving the study. If there are any new findings during the study that may affect whether you want to continue to take part, you will be told about them.

The researcher may decide to stop your participation without your permission, if he or she thinks that being in the study may cause you any harm, and if data collected is not useful for the intended goal of this research project.

12. Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Maissa Khatib at (915) 747-7031 or by email at mkhatib@utep.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research participant, please contact the director of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915)747-8841 or irb.orsp@utep.edu

13. What about confidentiality?

Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. Records will not have any identifying information. Data will consist of the time of the interview, the place visited, and a study I.D number that doesn't link to any of the participants' identifiers. Data will be kept in secure, locked cabinet in Liberal Arts building, room 117 at UTEP. Research team will have limited access to data. Audio tapes will be destroyed following the government's retention guidelines.

14. Mandatory Reporting

Potentially dangerous future behavior to self or others, as required by law, must be reported to the proper authorities.

15. Authorization Statement

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read/ translated to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I chose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on results of the study later if I wish.

☐ Yes, I agree to be recorded

☐ Yes, I can be contacted for further clarification or future research

☐ No, I do not agree to be recorded

☐ No, I cannot be contacted for further clarification or future research

Participant Printed Name: _____

Participant Signature : _____

Date : _____

Time: _____

Consent form explained/witnessed by: _____

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Appendix F: Informed Consent Form (Arabic Version)

طلب الموافقة المسبقة

جامعة تكساس في الباسو
عنوان البحث: تجربة العيش للمرأة العربية المسلمة في امريكا: دراسة
نوعية وصفية.
الباحث الرئيسي: ميساء خطيب, طالبة دكتوراه في قسم العلوم الصحية.
الباحث المشارك: الدكتورة لزلي روبنز

١. المقدمة

لقد تم سؤالك للتطوع في المشاركة في هذا البحث الموصوف في الأسفل.
أرجوك أن تأخذي وقتك لاتخاذ القرار بالمشاركة ويمكنك أن تناقشي هذا مع
أصدقائك والعائلة. أنه مهم أن تقرأي طلب الموافقة الذي يصف البحث قبل
أعطاء موافقتك.
لو سمحت اسألي الباحثة لتوضيح أي كلمة أو معلومة غير واضحة لك.

٢. لماذا يجري قيام هذه الدراسة؟

لقد سئلت للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة عن المرأة العربية المسلمة التي تعيش
في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. عدد السكان العرب في أمريكا ازداد بسرعة
على مدى السنوات الثلاثين الماضية. رغم ذلك هناك عدد قليل أوحى لا
يوجد دراسات تناقش حاجات هذه الجالية. هدف هذه الدراسة هو وصف
تجارب المرأة العربية المسلمة في العيش في أمريكا.
المشاركات في هذا البحث هن نساء عرب ومسلمات أعمارهن 21 سنة أو
أكبر بما فيه عينة مجتمع للمرأة العربية المسلمة. ترجمة عربية فورية أو
مكتوبة متوفرة عند الطلب. كل ما هو مطلوب من المشاركة هو مقابلة مدتها
تتراوح من ٦٠ الى ١٢٠ دقيقة.

لقد سئلت للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة لأنك عربية ومسلمة تسكنين في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية.

٣. ماذا تتضمن هذه الدراسة؟

إذا وافقت على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة، ستسألك الباحثة أن تقرأي وتوقعي طلب الموافقة امسبقة. وسوف تشاركون في مقابلة مدتها تتراوح من ساعة الى ساعتين. المقابلة ستتم في موعد واحد.

٤. ما هي مخاطر ومضايقات الدراسة؟
ليس هناك أي مخاطر معروفة مرتبطة في هذا البحث.

٥. ماذا سيحصل إذا تأثرت من هذه الدراسة؟
جامعة تكساس في الباسو والمؤسسات التابعة لا يعوضون أو يدفعون لعلاج طبي لأمراض أو اصابات متعلقة بالأبحاث. لم يوضع لهذه الدراسة ميزانية مالية للدفع أو تعويض في حال حدوث أي إصابة أو مرض.
توقيعك على هذا الطلب لن يفقدك أيًا من حقوقك القانونية. ينبغي عليك ابلاغ ميساء خطيب 9152563456 أو رئيس مجلس المراجعة المؤسسية في جامعة تكساس في الباسو 9157478841 أو عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني irb.ovsp@utep.edu عن أي إصابة.

٦. هل هناك منافع في اتخاذ هذه الدراسة؟
ليس هناك منافع مباشرة لمشاركتك في هذه الدراسة ولكن هذا البحث سيفتح المجال للمرأة العربية المسلمة لتقول قصتها عن العيش في أمريكا وهذا سيوفر معلومات للمساعدة على زيارة عهم وجهات نظر وحاجات المرأة العربية المسلمة.

٧. هل هناك خيارات أخرى؟

عندك اختيار عدم المشاركة في هذه الدراسة. ليس هناك أي عقوبات اذا قررت أن لا تشاركي في هذه الدراسة.

٨. من يمول هذه الدراسة؟

ليس هناك أي تمويل داخلي أو خارجي لهذه الدراسة. الدراسة معتمدة على الباحثة الرئيسية.

٩. ما هي تكاليفي؟

ليس هناك تكاليف مباشرة. مسؤوليتك هي التنقل من وإلى مكان المقابلة و أي تكاليف عرضية.

١٠. هل سأتقاضى أجرا على مشاركتي؟

سيقدم ليس هناك أي حافز للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة. المرطبات ستقدم أثناء المقابلة. سيقدّم لك بعد انتهاء المقابلة عشرون دولار بطاقة هدية من ولمارت (Wal-Mart).

١١. ماذا يحصل اذا أردت أن انسحب أو طلب مني أن انسحب من الدراسة؟

مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة تطوعي. لك الحق أن ترفض المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ولا يترتب أي عقوبات على قرارك هذا. اذا أردت المشاركة, لك الحق أن تتوقفي في أي وقت ولكن نشجعك أن تتكلمي مع الباحثة لتعرف سبب انسحابك. سوف يتم ابلاغك اذا كان هناك أي نتائج جديدة خلال الدراسة ممكن أن تؤثر على استمرارك في المشاركة في هذه الدراسة. قد تقرر الباحثة أن توقفك عن المشاركة بدون اذنك اذا لاقت أن وجودك في الدراسة سيسبب لك الأذى أو المعطيات المجموعة غير مفيدة للهدف المعد لهذا البحث.

١٢. بمن اتصل اذا كان عندي سؤال أو مشكلة؟
يمكنك أن تسألني أي سؤال لديك الآن. إذا كان عندك أسئلة لاحقاً، يمكنك
على رقم التلفون :الاتصال بميساء خطيب 9152563456
أو عن طريق البريد الالكتروني: mkhatib@utep.edu

أما اذا كان عندك أي سؤال عن مشاركتك في البحث, عليك الاتصال برئيس
مجلس المراجعة المؤسسية في جامعة تكساس في الباسو على رقم التلفون
التالي: 9157478841 أو عن طريق البريد الالكتروني:
irb.orsp@utep.edu

١٣. ماذا عن الخصوصية؟
مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة سرية. ولم يتم تقديم أي معلومة عنك بالأسم.
السجلات لن تحتوي على أي معلومات تعرف عن المشاركة. ستتكون
المعطيات المجموعة من وقت ومكان المقابلة ورقم بطاقة المشاركة
وهو رقم غير مربوط بمعلومات تكشف عن هوية المشاركة.
المعطيات ستحفظ في خزانة مؤمنة في مبنى الفنون الحرة في غرفة ١١٧
في جامعة تكساس في الباسو. فريق البحث له صلاحيات محددة للوصول
الى المعطيات. تتلف الشرائط حسب الارشادات الحكومية للاحتفاظ بها.

١٤. الزامية الابلاغ؟
عنداحتمال ايجاد سلوك في المستقبل خطر للشخص نفسه أو للآخرين سيتم
ابلاغ السلطات كما ينص عليه القانون.

١٥. بيان موافقة
لقد قرأت كل صفحة في هذا الطلب عن هذه الدراسة أو قرئ أو ترجم لي. أنا
أعلم أن وجودي في هذه الدراسة تطوعي وأنا اخترت أن أكون في هذه
الدراسة. أنا أعلم أنني أستطيع التوقف بدون أي عقوبة. سوف أحصل على

نسخة من طلب الموافقة المسبق ويمكنني الحصول على معلومات عن النتائج اذا اردت.

اسم المشاركة: _____
توقيع المشاركة: _____
التاريخ: _____
الوقت: _____

شرحت الطلب أو كانت شاهدة: _____
الاسم: _____
التوقيع: _____
التاريخ: _____
الوقت: _____

Appendix G: Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your place of origin? _____

2. How many years have you been in the U.S.? _____

3. What is your age? _____

4. What is your current marital status?

☐ Single

☐ Separated

☐ Married

☐ Divorced

☐ Widowed

☐ Other

5. Do you have children?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. What are their ages? _____

7. Do you work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

☐ Less than eighth grade

☐ Eighth grade

☐ Some high school

☐ Twelfth grade (High School graduate)

☐ Some college

☐ Associate's Degree

° Bachelor's Degree

° Some post-graduate

° Master's Degree

° Other Advanced Degree

9. Do you have an extended family?

° Yes

° No

10. Are you a practicing Muslim?

° Yes

° No

° Other: _____

11. Do you socialize with people outside the Arab Muslim community?

° Yes

° No

Appendix H: Demographic Questionnaire (Arabic Version)

الاستفتاء السكاني

1. ما هو الوطن الأم؟ ما هو مكان الولادة؟
2. كم سنة لك في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية؟
3. كم عمرك؟
4. ما هو وضعك الاجتماعي؟

عزباء

منفصلة

متزوجة

مطلقة

ارملة

اي شيء اخر

5. عندك اطفال؟

نعم

لا

6. كم اعمارهم؟

7. ما هو أعلى تحصيل علمي لك؟

أقل من الصف الثامن

الصف الثامن اعدادي

بعض السنوات في المدرسة الثانوية

ثانوية عامة
بعض السنوات في الكلية
دبلوم معهد
بكالوريوس اجازة 4 سنوات
بعض السنوات في الماجستير
ماجستير
دكتوراه
درجات جامعية متقدمة

8. هل تعملين؟

نعم
لا

9. هل عندك عائلة أو اهل هنا؟

نعم
لا

10. هل تمارسين الاسلام؟

نعم
لا

11. هل تعاشرين او تحتكين بناس خارج الجالية العربية المسلمة؟

نعم
لا

Appendix I: Interview Guide

The grand research question is: What are Arab Muslim women's experiences of living in the United States?

The following questions are examples of probes to be used:

- (1) Tell me about your life since immigrating to the U.S.?
- (2) What is it like to live in the U.S.?
- (3) Has your social network changed since immigrating to the U.S.?
- (4) Can you describe your relationship with others?
- (5) What kinds of activities do you do on a typical day? How do you spend your time?

VITA

Maissa Khatib earned her Bachelor of Art degree in English and American Literature from The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) in 2001. She received her Master of Art in Interdisciplinary Studies in 2005 from UTEP. For her thesis, “Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers”, she examined the social, political and health aspects in the lives of these women. In 2009, she joined the doctoral program in Interdisciplinary Health Sciences at UTEP.

Ms. Khatib has been the recipient of numerous honors and awards including Institute for Policy & Economic Development Award at UTEP for leading the development and implementation of the Intelligence Community Center of Academic Excellence High School and College Arabic Language Program. She also received the Department of Languages and Linguistics Faculty Outstanding Award. In addition, she was the recipient of STARTALK research grant funded through the U.S. National Security Agency.

While pursuing her degree, Ms. Khatib has been working as the director of the Arabic Program in the department of Languages and Linguistics. She worked as a co-investigator and the lead instructor for the Institute for Policy and Economic Development at UTEP, Arabic interpreter for Providence Memorial hospital, and a volunteer at Las Palmas hospital while raising her family and adjusting as an immigrant.

Ms. Khatib presented her previous research at national meetings including the Southwestern Social Science Association Conference. Ms. Khatib’s dissertation, “Arab Muslim immigrant women’s experiences of living in the United States: A Qualitative Descriptive Study”, was supervised by Dr. Leslie Robbins.

These experiences provided Ms. Khatib with valuable knowledge and insight into the design, coordination, and implementation of research studies and academic programs. In short term, she is considering to become a professor in health sciences. Her main research revolves around acculturation, health disparities, and immigrant women.