

HYPHENATED AMERICANS: CHRISTIAN  
ARAB-AMERICANS' IDENTITY  
STRUGGLE

by

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July 18, 2018

ABSTRACT

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The topic of this thesis is the understudied minority of Christian Arab-Americans (CAAs), and this research addresses the issues CAAs face in the United States with special attention to the factors that influence their cultural identity. The thesis provides a historical background on how Christian Arabs came to the United States and explains the factors that influence their identity struggle. The theoretical framework of my research is based on Berry's (1997) acculturation model. Ten participants were interviewed for this study, and a thematic analysis was conducted in order to determine the extent to which religiosity and perceived discrimination affects/influences the participants' acculturation mode. The findings can bring cultural awareness to society, and the research provides future researchers with a direction for studying the Christian Arab-American population.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....	viii
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 History.....	13
1.2 Literature Review.....	16
1.2.1 Identity .....	16
1.2.2 Whiteness.....	17
1.2.3 Pre- and Post-9/11 .....	23
1.3 Theoretical Background.....	28
1.3.1 Language.....	31
1.3.2 Religiosity .....	34
1.3.3 Perceived Discrimination and Acculturative Stress.....	38
1.3.4 Discrimination in the Media .....	43
2. METHODS .....	47
3. RESULTS .....	51
3.1 Alternation Model.....	53
3.2 Values .....	54

3.2.1 Who CAAs Spend Time With .....	54
3.2.2 Family Ties.....	55
3.3 Attitudes .....	56
3.3.1 9/11.....	57
3.3.2 What Makes CAAs Uncomfortable .....	58
3.3.3 What CAAs like about the United States.....	59
3.3.4 CAAs and their Connection to the United States.....	61
3.4 Beliefs .....	62
3.4.1 Reasons for Migrating to the United States.....	62
3.4.2 The American Dream and the Melting Pot.....	63
3.4.3 CAAs and their Religiosity.....	64
3.4.4 CAAs and Language Difficulties.....	65
3.4.5 Discrimination.....	66
4. DISCUSSION.....	69
4.1 Religiosity and Acculturation .....	69
4.2 Percieved Discrimination and Acculturation .....	70
4.3 Additional Findings .....	72
4.4 Limitations and Future Research .....	73
APPENDIX A RECRUITMENT FLIER .....	76
APPENDIX B SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE .....	78

REFERENCES .....	83
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION .....	94

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1-1 Racial categorization from U.S. Census 2000 short form.....	16
Figure 1-2 Potential MENA racial categorization for U.S. Census 2020 short form.....	19
Figure 1-3 Religious Make-Up of Arab-Americans .....	21
Figure 1-4 Berry’s Acculturation Model .....	29
Figure 1-5 Example back of a Jordanian identification card .....	36
Figure 3-1 LaFromboise et al.’s Alternation Model .....	53



## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 3-1 Participants' Demographics.....	54

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Many immigrants to America struggle with finding a balance between retaining the deeply held traditions of their native culture and adapting to an American culture with appealing new traditions —and some that may not be as appealing (Ajrouch, 2000). Webster’s Dictionary (1913) states “an American who is referred to by a hyphenated term with the first word indicating an origin in a foreign country, and the second term being ‘American’” is a hyphenated American. For an individual to identify as a hyphenated American, it is not just a matter of combining words; it is a matter of fusing the home culture with the host culture. These hyphenated Americans, such as Christian Arab-Americans (CAAs), struggle to identify their personal values and make decisions based off of those values (Ajrouch, 2000). It's not just the values but also the issue of identity in general that is a problem. A public misconception and a frequent stereotype is that all Arabs and Arab-Americans are Muslim (Weston, 2003). An extension of this is the stereotypical belief that all Muslims are terrorists and therefore, all Arabs are terrorists. Although most of the population in the Arab World are of Islamic faith, most Arab-Americans are Christians whose descent can be traced well before Islam was even a religion. In fact, according to Awad (2010), 77% of Arab-Americans are Christians (which includes Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox religions). Similarly, this research considers an individual a Christian if they identify themselves as Christian, Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox.

This purpose of this study is to bridge the gap in the literature on the 77% of Arab-Americans who identify as Christians and provide a foundation for future researchers on the acculturation process of CAAs (Awad, 2010). Most of the existing research has focused on Muslim Arab-Americans, who are only 23% of the total make-up of Arabs in America (Semaan, 2014; Awad, 2010); however, this thesis focuses solely on the Christian Arab-American perspective as this is an uncommon field of research. In order to fully serve the purpose of this thesis, Christian Arab-Americans are defined by looking back on the historical context that brought them to the United States. Using qualitative scholarly articles, this research conceptualizes the fundamental differences in the Arab Christian culture that may lead to struggles for those living in the United States. This study uses Mironenko and Sorokin's (2018) definition of culture, which is "a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses processes, products and results of human activity, material and spiritual, transmitted from generation to generation in a non-biological way" (p.338). In this thesis, home culture refers to the original or native culture of the immigrant, while host culture refers to the dominant culture in the country where the immigrant relocates—in this case, the United States. For example, Arab-Americans struggle with their cultural identity; they can feel as if they belong to one or the other but not to one culture exclusively (Mango, 2010). Some struggles Arab-Americans can encounter, especially in the early stages of acculturation, include intercultural miscommunications that can be explained by the challenges they face in identifying themselves with a particular group.

Historical events can impact the way Arab-Americans identify themselves (Semaan, 2015). Many modern historical events have included people of Arab-American identity and can impact the way CAAs identify their culture. For example, Arab-Americans pre-9/11 may find their struggles to be interpersonal while Arab-Americans post-2001 may recognize their identity from a critical perspective where context influences the formation of their identity (Witteborn, 2004). Post-9/11 Arab-Americans can shape their identity based on the historical forces and resist attributing their identity based on the ascription process where an individual has defined them (Witteborn, 2004). This constant negotiation can impede the success of intercultural interactions. This research uses a cross-cultural viewpoint and acculturation theory as a framework to show how CAAs reconcile the two sets of norms: their parents or ancestral norms from the Arab World, and the set of norms they grew up with or spent an extended period experiencing in the United States.

Unlike in the Middle East, Christians constitute the majority of Arab-Americans in the United States (Awad, 2010). However, the general American public does not make the distinction between “Arabs” and “Muslims” (Weston, 2003). Therefore, by focusing on this particular religion of Arab-Americans, this research can bring awareness of this distinction to American society. For the purpose of this study, Christian Arab-Americans are defined as those who are of the Christian faith and whose ancestry can be traced back to any of the twenty-two countries (Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Syria) that are a part

of the Arab World. The goal of this research is to help Christian Arab-Americans find it easier to engage in intercultural interactions by understanding that they are not alone, and to understand that other hyphenated Americans struggle with their identity. Other scholars may find this thesis as a valuable foundation for future of research on Christian Arab-Americans and other hyphenated Americans' struggles because this study focuses solely on the CAA perspective.

### 1.1 History

In the period from 1790-1880, immigrants to the United States settled as farmers in the West. However, America's industrialization altered the ways new immigrants settled into economic and civic life (Schultz, 2011). During the last few decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, more than 23 million immigrants arrived in America, making for the largest wave of immigrants to ever enter the United States (Schultz, 2011). Immigrants of this time came to work in the United States and live in company housing, but immigrants were not settling; they only wished to collect wealth to return to their country of origin (Semaan 2013; Schultz, 2011). Approximately 95,000 of the 23 million immigrants were from Greater Syria (present-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel), making this the first recorded wave of Arab immigrants to the United States (Arab American National Museum, 2011).

The first wave of Arab immigrants to the United States were primarily Christian Syrians who voluntarily immigrated to seek economic betterment during the years 1880-1924, when the American economy was proliferating due to the industrial revolution

(Schultz, 2011; Amer, 2014; Semaan, 2015). Reports state that in addition to Syrian ancestry, the first Arabs to immigrate were also of Lebanese, Egyptian, and Palestinian ancestry (Amer, 2014; Semaan, 2015). Not only did Christian Arabs escape the Arab World for economic betterment, but they also migrated for greater religious freedom and other perceived positive aspects of American culture (Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb, 1997). They worked as farmers, peddlers, tradesmen, and small store owners (Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Wingfield, 2006; Bale, 2010). They were predominantly poor and uneducated, and they spoke little English (Hakim-Larson, Nassar-McMillan, & Lambert, 2011). Additionally, during World War I, Arab-Americans were forced to be isolated from their home countries, and patriotic Americanization efforts coerced total abandonment of non-American cultures (Ziegler-McPherson, 2009). Thus, the earlier Arab-American settlers preferred to rapidly assimilate into the educational, economic, political, and cultural ways of American life (Amer, 2014).

By the time of World War II, the Arab immigrants from the first wave and their children adjusted well to American society (Amer, 2014). Arabs who arrived to the United States after World War II are considered part of the second wave (Naber, 2000; Amer, 2014). Latter Arab immigrants consisted of higher educated Arabs, some of them Muslims who sought refuge from war and preserved their ancestral culture more so than the first wave that assimilated quicker (Hakim-Larson et al., 2011). This second wave of Arab immigrants brought more Arab nationalism by self-identifying as Arab, differing from the first wave (Naber, 2000; Amer, 2014).

In the late 1960s, during the third wave of Arab immigrants, self-identifying as Arab continued and these immigrants came for educational purposes and to seek refuge (Semaan, 2015; Amer, 2014). The third wave of Arab-Americans also show less assimilation than the first wave and keep their religious and cultural traditions, showing less interaction with American society (Amer, 2014). Coming mostly from Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, and Iraq, Arab immigrants post-1965 include more Muslims than Christians with stronger feelings of Arab nationalism (Naber, 2000; Amer, 2014).

More recently, the 2010 U.S. Census estimated that 1.8 million Arab-Americans live in the United States. According to the Arab American Institute (2014), there were about 3.7 million Arab-Americans in the United States in 2012, consisting of immigrants from Jordan, Iraq, Morocco, Yemen, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Kuwait, Libya, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain, as well as the aforementioned Arab immigrants in the first wave (Semaan, 2015).

## 1.2 Literature Review

### 1.2.1 Identity

**8. What is Person 1's race? Mark  one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.**

White

Black, African Am., or Negro

American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.* ↗

\_\_\_\_\_

Asian Indian     Japanese     Native Hawaiian

Chinese     Korean     Guamanian or Chamorro

Filipino     Vietnamese     Samoan

Other Asian — *Print race.* ↗     Other Pacific Islander — *Print race.* ↗

\_\_\_\_\_

Some other race — *Print race.* ↗

\_\_\_\_\_

Figure 1-1 Racial categorization from U.S. Census 2000 short form

Because the U.S. Census Bureau did not have a category for Arab-Americans, it required them to identify as “white” (Semaan, 2015) (See Figure 1-1). Some scholars view race as a social construction rather than biological, obligating Arab-Americans to identify as a classification that they may not identify as themselves (Naber, 2000). This is a compelling acculturation paradox because this immigrant group is a minority; however, they are obligated to classify themselves as a member of the majority host culture (Amer, 2014).



Depending on the context, an individual can make different aspects of their identity salient at different times (Mango, 2010). In some contexts, some Arab-Americans feel protected by the white classification (Amer, 2014). Mango (2010) used a focus group to examine how Arab-American women positioned their identity in differing contexts. The women overtly used labels of hyphenated identities that affiliated them with the other participants: “Arab-American”, “Middle-Eastern American”, and other categories that affiliated them with both an Arab and an American identity (Mango, 2010). Amer (2010) also found that some Arab-Americans preferred a special ethnic status as “Arab” or “Middle-Eastern”, like the existing “Hispanic” classification. Once settled in the United States, Arabs identified as “Arab-Americans” rather than a hyphenated national identity such as “Jordanian-Americans” or “Lebanese-Americans” (Bale, 2010). Some participants preferred to be viewed as the “other” status and even selected “other” on the census because they identified themselves as a minority of color (Amer, 2014). Mango (2012) also suggested that the respondents faced a challenge in their wording that could encircle all their various identities. For this reason, many scholars argue that the white category makes Arab-Americans invisible, and some in the Arab-American population feel that a separate category for Middle Eastern racial/ethnic classification should be created (Naber, 2000).

### *1.2.2 Whiteness*

Previous research found that for Arab-Americans, the “white” classification is associated with privilege, access to education, and freedom (Ajrouch, 2000). Arab-

Americans who claim whiteness are interested in the perceived privileges that come with the label (Abdulrahim, James, Yamout, & Baker, 2012). There is one aspect of whiteness that does not guarantee one will not experience discrimination: skin color (Abdulrahim et al., 2012). According to Abdulrahim et al. (2012), “When Christian Arab-Americans and those who have light skin experience discrimination, their health is more negatively impacted by it than Muslim Arab Americans and those who have darker skin” (p. 2121). In other words, an individual may see a CAA, recognize physical features, and identify them as a Muslim because they assume that all individuals of Arab descent have the same traits. This is difficult for many because they are perceived by non-Arabs to be not quite white or different from what others believe are defining characteristics of white (Amer, 2014). However, on the basis of their religion (Christianity), earlier immigrants felt that they could more easily claim whiteness (Abdulrahim et al., 2012; Gualtieri, 2001). As more Muslim immigrants enter the United States, claiming whiteness has reduced and Arab-Americans wish to identify as a non-white racial category (Abdulrahim et al., 2012).

The U.S. Census Bureau defines the white racial category as, “A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa”. One of the many purposes of conducting a census is to confirm equal representation of racial minorities and provide equal opportunities in the realms of education, health, and employment (Pavlovskaya & Bier, 2012). As a part of the white majority, this means that Arab-Americans are not able to receive benefits such as federal loans like others who can claim a minority status (Pavlovskaya & Bier, 2012). Their lack of recognition as a

minority group may also be the reason for the limited research on the health of Arab Americans (Abdulrahim et al., 2012; Samari, 2016). In the 2000 census, one fifth of Arab-Americans showed their appeal towards a separate race category by choosing “white” along with another race, or they chose “other” and wrote “Arab” or a specific Arab ancestry such as “Lebanese” (Pavlovskaya & Bier, 2012). Some Arab immigrants do not even fill out the census form, making the census reflect a smaller Arab-American population than reported by the Arab American Institute because of suspicions that the U.S. Government is trying to collect personal information to target them (Pavlovskaya & Bier, 2012; Bale, 2010).

**Middle Eastern or North African** – *Print, for example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.* ↴

Figure 1-2 Potential MENA racial categorization for U.S. Census 2020 short form

The U.S. Census Bureau first introduced the decision to create a new racial category when former President Barack Obama was in office (Wang, 2018). This separate category would apply to individuals with Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) descent (Harb, 2015; Khalifeh, 2018). The possibility of including this new box for Arab-Americans would become a part of the 2020 U.S. Census (See Figure 1-2), and advocates believe this new way of collecting demographic information would improve the lives of Arab-Americans because statistics on health, education, and discrimination would be collected accurately based off of the new demographics (Khalifeh, 2018). By

conducting a focus group, the U.S. Census Bureau tested the new MENA category but rejected it in 2018 due to the need for further research (Kahlifeh, 2018; Wang, 2018).

Christians are more likely to identify themselves within the white category than their Muslim counterparts, and Muslim Arab-Americans are more likely to classify themselves in the “other” category (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007). CAAs and those with higher education are more inclined to identify as white (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Amer, 2014). Because Arab-Americans are considered to be white by U.S. national demographic standards, CAAs are made a minority group for which it is difficult to collect records of discrimination in the United States.

Approximately 77% of the Arab-American population are Christian. More specifically, 42% of CAAs identified as Catholic, 23% as Orthodox, and 12% as Protestant (Awad, 2010) (See Figure 1-3, next page). However, three of the respondents in Witteborn’s (2007) study felt that they should not identify as Arab because for them, being Christian and Arab were oppositional identities. Though CAAs are considered a part of the majority religion in the United States, some researchers state that their religious beliefs were questioned. The U.S. Roman Catholic Church did not recognize CAAs until the 1960s, and American Baptists do not recognize Arab-Americans’ religion until they are baptized again (Younes, 2005).

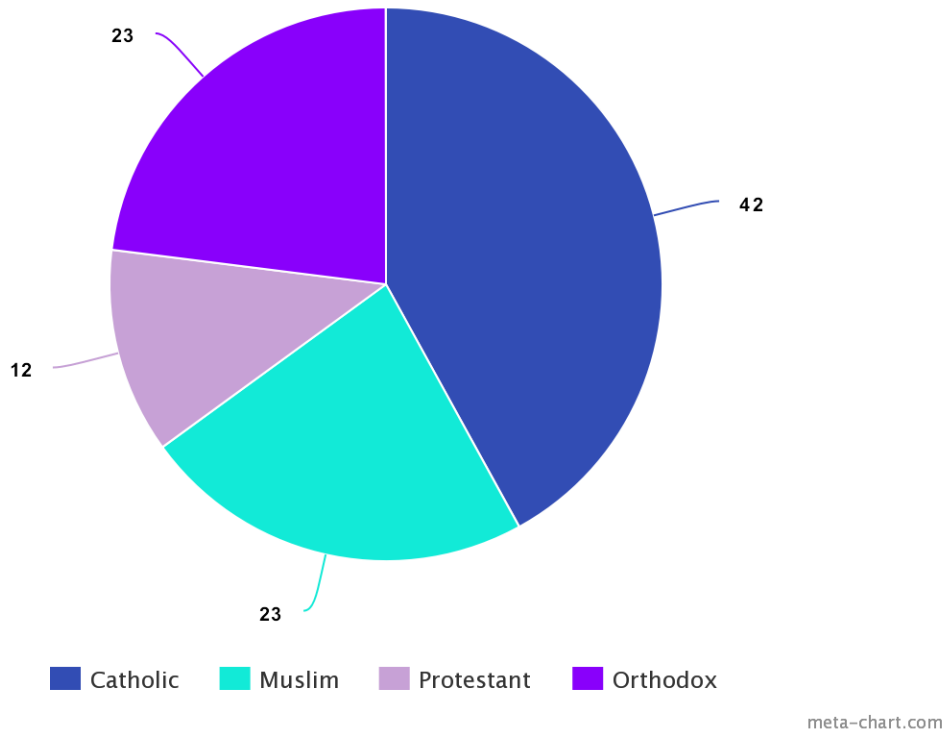


Figure 1-3 Religious Make-Up of Arab-Americans

Other ways CAAs may struggle is by deciding which cultural dimension they feel best fits their identity. Initially created to understand how values in the workplace are influenced by culture, Hofstede (2011) created six dimensions of national culture, and each dimension is used to compare and contrast countries with each other. One dimension of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory is “Individualism vs. Collectivism” (Hofstede, 2011). The history of the United States shows that it is deeply rooted in individualism, especially when considering its political history and religious history (Darwish & Huber, 2003). Cultures found to fall under individualism are where an individual is expected to only look after his or herself and their immediate family (Hofstede, 2011). Collectivist

are cultures are those in which people are born into strong groups that protect them in exchange for loyalty (Hofstede, 2011). Collectivism and individualism have been widely discussed in research pertaining to religion and cultural patterns (Darwish & Huber, 2003). Within collectivist cultures, an individual feels stress to belong to a particular group, and any breach of the norm leads to feelings of shame (Hofstede, 2011). The United States ranks number one in Hofstede's dimension of individualism, and this means that the interest of the individual conquers over the interest of the group (Jandt, 2016). Individualistic cultures such as the United States promote independence, autonomy, an understanding of one's personal identity as the total of attributes of the individual, and less concerns about others' interests (Darwish & Huber, 2003).

Across many Middle Eastern countries, Hofstede's dimension of collectivism can be witnessed throughout, meaning that Arabs emphasize their relationship among people and value interdependent activities (Jandt, 2016). Arabs have a collectivist culture because in the past, Arab tribes needed strong community protection in order to survive threats from outsiders (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, 2014). Arabian countries and other collectivist societies promote loyalty to the group, emotional dependence, interdependence, understanding of personal identity as it places within the group, and more concerns about others' interests (Darwish & Huber, 2003). Jandt (2016) states, "Often, it is difficult for individuals from highly individualist cultures to understand collectivist values" (p. 163). This means when individuals from a collectivist tradition immigrate to a country that values individualism, there is bound to be a clash of cultures.

Arab-Americans can face some challenges coming from a collectivist culture and experiencing their lives as the minority group with forced marginalization and discrimination in the United States, even though their legal classification places them alongside the majority (Amer, 2014; Pavlovskaya & Bier, 2012). “Religious affiliation shapes how the host country views the immigrant as well as how the immigrant views him/herself vis a vis the host country” (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007, p. 861). Arab-Americans’ visibility is ever-changing depending on the political context and historical events that happen in the United States and abroad (Semaan, 2015). For Arab-Americans in particular, the historical event known as 9/11 can impact the way they choose to identify themselves (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007).

### *1.2.3 Pre- and Post-9/11*

9/11 refers to a terrorist attack carried out by an Islamic militant group called Al-Qaeda founded and led by Osama bin Laden. On September 11, 2001, four airplanes were hijacked by 19 militants, 15 of whom were from Saudi Arabia, with the rest from Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. Two of the planes hit the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Another plane hit the Pentagon near Washington, D.C., and one plane crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. Nearly 3,000 people were killed, making 9/11 the largest terrorist attack to occur in the history of the United States (History.com, 2010). Arab-Americans went from an invisible minority group to a very visible group because of the 9/11 attacks (Cainkar, 2002).

Few studies prior to 9/11 examined the acculturation process of Arab-Americans, but those that did included issues such as discrimination, religion, the reasons for immigration, and identity (Hakim-Larson et al., 2011). One factor that all hyphenated Americans may encounter during the acculturation process is discrimination. Prejudicial and discriminatory acts including physical and psychological attacks against Arab-Americans were reported even prior to 9/11 (Moradi & Hasan, 2004). Authorities received reports of discrimination towards Arab-Americans in the United States as early as 1914 (Awad, 2010). Weston (2003) analyzed stories from newspapers before and after 9/11 for themes, images, and texture using narrative and framing constructs. “Arab-Americans have frequently complained that the public at large does not distinguish between Arabs and Muslims despite the fact that a majority of Arab-Americans are Christians, and only 12 percent of Muslims worldwide are Arabs” (Weston, 2003, p. 94).

Given the historical context at the time of Faragallah et al.’s 1997 study (Iranian hostage crisis, bombings in the marine barracks in Lebanon, and the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City), the authors concluded that discrimination against Arab-Americans had not declined over time. The amount of media attention on Arabs following those events can be an underlying cause for the difficulties Arab-Americans face during the acculturation process, even pre-9/11. Weston (2003) found that a dominant theme of pre-9/11 stories was of Arab-Americans resisting stereotypes and discrimination. Oh (2008) built upon Weston’s (2003) textual analysis to examine a broader range of news articles. Oh (2008) conducted a content analysis of Arab-American coverage in major U.S. newspapers one year prior to 9/11 and one year after the event.



Pre-9/11, 17% of the articles depicted Arab-Americans as a violent threat or in an unusual manner and portrayed them as unproductive members of society.

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, Arab-Americans became a very visible group in the United States (Semaan, 2015). Padela and Heisler (2010) attributes this to media attention and an increase in anti-Arab discrimination. Some media in the immediate days following 9/11 show that Arab-Americans were “double victims” of the tragedy because they suffered as the rest of the country and lost loved ones, but they simultaneously were discriminated against because of the horrific events in which they had no part (Weston, 2003). After 9/11, Arab-Americans became the target of hate crimes yet at the same time also received support (Amer, 2014; Oh, 2008; Semaan, 2015; Wingfield, 2006). As a result of the 9/11 terrorist attack, prejudice was more evident towards Arab-Americans, and Arabs’ ethnic identity grew stronger (Khakimova, Zhang & Hall, 2012). Arab immigrants who were considered less acculturated than other Arab-Americans were believed by researchers to experience more adverse social consequences from the 9/11 attacks (Abdulrahim & Baker, 2009).

Other forms of discrimination experienced by Arab-Americans are employments and institutionalized discrimination (Moradi & Hasan, 2004). In a Zogby poll, 69% of respondents believed that Arab-Americans suffered profiling, and nearly half of the respondents experienced discrimination firsthand following the attacks (Semaan, 2014). However, Arab-Americans were described sympathetically as victims in newspapers, increasing from 6% to 15% (Oh, 2008). Some schools in the United States responded to

9/11 by taking actions to prevent backlash against their Arab-American students (Wingfield, 2006). Repeatedly, 9/11 was remembered as an event that influenced the importance of expressing collective identities (Witteborn, 2004). This concern for Arab-American victimization supports the belief of a racially tolerant and accepting society (Oh, 2008).

An increased negative perception and acts of discrimination toward the communities of Arab-Americans is also documented during the aftermath of 9/11, which was known as the “War on Terror” (Goforth, 2011). The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) confirmed nearly 700 violent acts toward Arab-Americans during the first nine weeks following 9/11 (Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Muhtaseb & Frey, 2008). Research showed that 61% of the Arab-American participants polled in Zogby’s (2001) research were concerned that the aftermath of 9/11 would lead to perpetual discrimination for Arab-Americans.

The Patriot Act, the development of Homeland Security, and heightened security at airports were among some of the micro and macro events that changed the lives of Arab-Americans following 9/11 (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007). Following the Patriot Act, Arab-Americans feared possible deportation, arrest, and searches (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, 2014). Illegal wiretapping and surveillance were among some of the constitutional violations experienced by Arab-Americans following 9/11 (Wingfield, 2006). Businesses owned by Arabs or those thought to be Arab were vandalized following 9/11 (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, 2014). Decreased numbers of Arabs entering the

United States for employment or attending collegiate institutions were reported because of extra security measures, policy delays, and other system barriers (Wingfield, 2006).

Perhaps the most recent and common reports of discrimination are related to additional searches during airport travel where Arab-Americans feel that they are being profiled and stereotyped. Profiling is an act by law enforcement of investigating a person based on their features (Jandt, 2016). Having a thick accent or an Arabic name are language identifiers which provoke incidences of stereotyping (Abdulrahim & Baker, 2009). Following 9/11, law enforcement agencies in the United States were given more leniency to engage in more extensive security checks of people who appeared to be of Middle Eastern descent, and especially among individuals who were traveling alone as it is believed that one who travels alone is more likely to engage in terrorist operations (Jandt, 2016). Some Arab-Americans reported feeling out of place, and heightened security led some Arab men to drugs and alcohol use (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, 2014). A survey by the Arab American Institute found that there was a 78% increase in profiling of Arab-Americans after 9/11 (Hakim-Larson et al., 2011). The ADC reported four times its typical amount of airline discrimination reports in the six months following 9/11 (Moradi & Hasan, 2004). Other more recent forms of institutional discrimination include the U.S. travel ban during President Trump's administration where U.S. entry for people from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen was not permitted. The ban also temporarily suspended the entrance of refugees into the United States (Eqbali & Fitch, 2017).

Because a part of Witteborn's (2004) study was conducted before 9/11, she examined the effect of the event on the labels the respondents use to express their identity. National identity, such as Palestinian or Egyptian, was emphasized in a greater way after 9/11 because of the need for public awareness of diversity within the Arab World to counteract the monoethnic identity that existed during the early periods that followed the event (Witteborn, 2004). Witteborn (2004) also found less usage of the identity labels "Arab" and "Arab-American" among the respondents after 9/11.

### 1.3 Theoretical Background

The theoretical framework chosen for this study is based on Berry's (1997) acculturation model. Acculturation is defined as the cultural change an individual experiences due to direct contact of at least two distinct cultures (Berry, 1992). Berry (1997) states that acculturation includes a process in which one's attitudes and behaviors change. Berry's (1997) theory of acculturation proposed four acculturation strategies: assimilation, marginalization, separation, and integration (See Figure 1-4, next page). These four strategies are related to the degree to which an individual keeps their heritage culture and the degree to which an individual desires contact with the host culture (Berry, 1997). The role of acculturation is important to the understanding of Arab-Americans' attitudes toward both the original and host cultures (Awad, 2010; Semaan, 2015). For Arab-Americans to define their identities, they must overcome the challenges of living in the host country and negotiate their former and current senses of self (Amer, 2014). Like

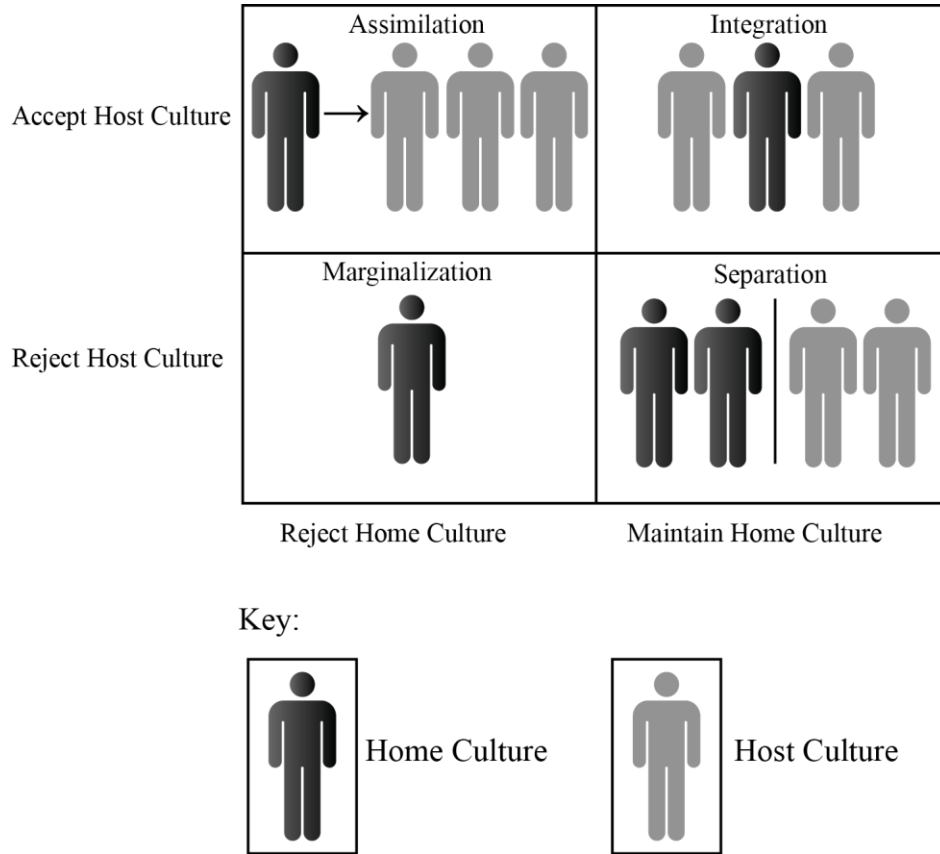


Figure 1-4 Berry's Acculturation Model

any hyphenated American, a combination of the culture from the country of origin and American culture makes an identity specific to that group (Mango, 2010).

Immigrants experiencing acculturation are faced with two opposing issues: (1) cultural maintenance or the extent to which the individual maintains their cultural identity, and (2) contact and participation or the degree to which the individual wants to be involved with the mainstream or majority culture in the new country (Berry, 1997).

Research has disregarded the impact of the host society on determining Arab-Americans'

acculturation even though Berry's (1997) acculturation model includes the host culture influence.

LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) viewed Berry's acculturation model as stable, and the authors argued that an individual could be successful in both cultures. It is important for an individual who is monocultural to develop skills in understanding how to be competent in both cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993). If an individual can successfully move between the two cultures, they are considered biculturally competent (LaFromboise et al., 1993). LaFromboise et al. (1993) identified five types of biculturalism or what is also called models of second-culture acquisition. The five subcategories or strategies are:

1) Assimilated-the process of acquiring the culture of the host country and losing the home culture. The assimilation model usually defines an individual who experiences acculturative stress, isolation, and fear of rejection from members of the host culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

2) Alternation- the ability for one to move back and forth between their original culture and the culture of the host country depending on the context. The alternation model accepts an individual's ability to feel that they belong in both cultures without having to adjust their cultural identity (LaFromboise et al., 1993). An individual who can effectively alternate between two cultures has a better psychological health status and experiences less acculturative stress than an individual who is acculturated (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

3) Fusion-creating a new culture by combining the aspects of both the host and home cultures. Unlike the assimilation and acculturation models, fusion does not assume one culture is superior to another (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

4) Acculturated- not fully accepting of the host culture but has the ability to adapt to the majority culture. The acculturation subcategory assumes a hierarchy between the host and home cultures, and unlike the subcategory of assimilated, acculturation implies that the individual will always be a part of the home culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

5) Multicultural- distinct cultures work at the same time for the common good (LaFromboise et al., 1993). The multicultural model asserts that a group maintains its identity, learns the language of the host country, and is involved with and accepted by other groups (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

LaFromboise et al. (1993) describe the phrase bicultural competence as a process which one undergoes to satisfy the requirements of two separate cultures. Schwartz and Zamboanga (2008) suggest that Berry's integration strategy can comprise of LaFromboise et al.'s (1993) five types of biculturalism. Language, religiosity, and discrimination are among the factors that can affect the acculturation process.

### *1.3.1 Language*

In the Arab World, two forms of Arabic are used (Bale, 2010). The Arabic used in the media, business, government, and in education is known as modern standard Arabic (Bale, 2010). The other form is used in social interactions which is classified into four categories based on regions: 1) Egyptian Arabic (Egypt and Sudan), 2) Levantine

Arabic (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine), 3) Iraqi (or Gulf) Arabic, 4) North African Arabic (the Maghreb region, which consists of Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania) (Bale, 2010). Because Arabs already alternate between two forms of Arabic (standard and vernacular), some scholars argue they are already bilingual (Bale, 2010).

Language can be a barrier in two ways: (1) when there are issues of translation and the full meaning of the message is not shared between the two languages, and (2) when one group forces an individual to use the dominant group's language (Jandt, 2016). This can add to the reasons that Arab-Americans struggle to acculturate because Arabic is not widely spoken in the United States. Learning a new language can be difficult, especially because translation is more than just exchanging one word in one language to another word in the host language. The greater the vocabulary for one thing or activity, the more important that thing or activity is to that culture (Jandt, 2016). For example, Arabic vocabulary is so rich, there are 3,000 words for camel (Jandt, 2016). Camels are known for surviving in desert areas where other livestock can't survive and for migrating far distances (Eades, Watson, & Mahri, 2013). Especially among the Bedouins, nomadic Arabs of the desert, camels are important to the Arab culture (Eades et al., 2013). Not only is it difficult to learn a new language, but even in home life, maintaining the Arabic language has proven unsuccessful in the acculturation process (Bale, 2010).

Because immigrants face difficulty in speaking the language of the host country, they may experience discrimination and traumatic events, and they can even be at special risk for mental disorder (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000). The longer the contact one has with the host country, the greater their language skills and knowledge of the host



culture, which means there is greater contact between the hyphenated American and the majority group, resulting in a decrease of prejudice (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000). Researchers can use language as a measure or indicator to determine the extent to which an immigrant has become influenced by the host culture (Abdulrahim & Baker, 2009). In 1920, there were many publications for Arab-Americans in Arabic, but they rapidly shifted to English because the first wave of Arab immigrants were quick to learn English (Bale, 2010). One reason Arab immigrants were quick to learn the English language is because in order to become a citizen, immigrants' English language skills were tested as a qualification of citizenship (Schultz, 2011).

Rates of naturalization among the wave of immigrants from the early twentieth century were low (Schultz, 2011). The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization provided local school districts with booklets and manuals on the English language as an effort to Americanize the new wave of immigrants and boost rates of naturalization (Schultz, 2011). However, the education movement implemented by the Bureau raised naturalization rates by a small percentage (Schultz, 2011).

According to Jandt (2016), the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis postulates that "reality is embedded in culture's language and that language controls thought and cultural norms" (p.128). An example used by Jandt (2016) of how Arabs' use of vocabulary is embedded in culture is how Arabs say *inshallah* or "if God is willing" instead of saying no because it is considered impolite to say no directly. This difference in Arabic language styles compared to the often direct American communication style is just one example of how CAAs may face difficulty when communicating with members of the host culture. Other

difficulties can be found because of the effects of cultural perception. The concept of high-context cultures and low-context cultures was made popular by Edward T. Hall (Jandt, 2016). The United States is labeled as a low context culture, which means that little meaning is determined by the context because the message is explicit (Jandt, 2016). For Middle Eastern countries, the level of the context is high; that is, meaning is derived within the context, the environment, or shared experiences (Jandt, 2016). Arabs are defined as high context because of the influence and emphasis of family, community, and institutions (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, 2014). Similar to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory of Individualism vs. Collectivism, high context cultures emphasize collectivism, and these cultures tend to have slower rates of social change compared to low context or individualistic cultures (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, 2014). Thus, language changes can be a difficult and slow process for Arabs during acculturation.

### *1.3.2 Religiosity*

Religion plays an important role in understanding Arab-Americans' acculturation experiences. Religiosity, the degree to which one is religious, and their attendance to a religious organization can influence a hyphenated American's acculturation process (Goforth, 2011). Arab identity is deeply rooted within their religion, family, and culture (Amer, 2014). Religion plays an important role in one's awareness of their racial group, which help the individual determine to which extent they will adopt or reject American culture (Amer, 2014). Because there were very few priests that spoke Arabic, when Arabs began to migrate to the United States, Arab-Americans' language of worship was English (Bale, 2010). However, stereotypes of Arab-Americans in the United States and the

negative opinions western churches have towards churches of the East made CAAs slow to assimilate into churches in the United States (Naff, 1993). Western churches criticized Christians from the region because of their ties with the Eastern churches (Naff, 1993). Samari (2016) lists attendance to religious services as a form of social contact which helps an individual maintain ties with their country of origin. Goforth's (2011) study found that among younger Arab-Americans, those with low religiosity were less likely to maintain their heritage culture, and those with medium or high reported religiosity maintained higher levels of their heritage culture. Higher levels of religiosity also correlated with higher integrated acculturation levels compared to the young Arab-Americans who reported lower levels of religiosity (Goforth, 2011).

There are between 10 million and 12 million Christian Arabs in countries such as Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine (Wingfield, 2006). Christian Arabs proudly trace their history back to the days of Jesus and the Apostles and have maintained their faith through the spread of Islam (Wingfield, 2006). The division of religion and government is not typical in most Arab countries (Abi-Hashem, 2008). In Arab countries, religious categories are specified on national identification cards (see Figure 1-5, next page) and designate social structure, whereas in the United States, Arab-Americans' identities are organized by racial categories (Naber, 2000; Abi-Hashem, 2008). "Religious affiliation, often ignored in the immigrant literature as a key facet of successful incorporation, may heavily influence racial identity placements and announcements" (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007, p. 861). Aspects of religious practices and participation may be specific to Christians and may not be relevant for Muslims (Goforth, 2011). For example, attendance



According to Berry (1997), marginalization happens when attitudes to both one's own and host cultures are negative.

Integration occurs when attitudes toward both cultures are positive, and this means maintaining one's original cultural identity and adapting to the host culture (Berry, 1997). Social and religious organizations play a major role in Arab-Americans' social integration in the host country (Semaan, 2014). If the person considers acceptance of the host culture positively and views maintaining the ancestral cultural identity negatively, then assimilation occurs (Semaan, 2015). Christian Arabs have more positive attitudes toward the new culture and seek greater immersion because the reason to leave their country of origin was for greater religious freedom from the minority religious status they once held (Amer, 2014). Previous research results showed higher levels of life satisfaction were reported in mainstream societies that had greater acculturation levels. Arab Christians reported higher levels of acculturation than Arab Muslims (Awad, 2010). If the attitude an Arab-American has toward maintaining cultural identity and characteristics is positive and the attitude toward the host culture is negative, the outcome is separation (Semaan, 2015).

However, for Christians in their country of origin, they are less often salient about their religious identity (Witteborn, 2007). When identifying themselves, CAAs are less likely to bring up their religious identifier, which some researchers believe is because CAAs do not face as many challenges as Muslims when it comes to their spiritual identity and CAAs conform quicker to the existing majority religious status, cultures, and

norms than Muslim Arab immigrants (Witteborn, 2007; Faragallah et al., 1997).

According to Amer (2014), religious affiliation can itself predict acculturation patterns.

Therefore, religiosity plays a key role in understanding the acculturation process of Arab-Americans.

### *1.3.3 Perceived Discrimination and Acculturative Stress*

Another risk factor in the acculturation process that can lead to segregation of Arab-Americans is discrimination (Amer, 2014). Though the U.S. Census Bureau has defined Arab-Americans as white, they are not perceived as such by the media and in social situations (Naber, 2000). Like other immigrants to the United States, Arabs feel social pressure to become “100% American” and adopt American culture (Wingfield, 2006).

Quillian, Cook, and Massey (2006) state, “Unlike prejudice, which is an attitude in people’s heads, discrimination is present in behavior,” and they define discrimination as “differential treatment on the basis of race that disadvantages a racial group” (p. 300). This study uses this definition for discrimination and recognizes prejudice as a force that motivates discrimination (Quillian et al., 2006). Individuals may experience discrimination or profiling based on their appearance, dress, or name; an individual may choose to interact with others who are similar to them rather than shape their identities by belonging with members of the host country (Rousseau, Hassan, Moreau, & Thombs, 2011). This may be why there are high concentrations of Arab-Americans in only ten states: New York, Michigan, California, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Florida, New

Jersey, Virginia, and Texas (Arab American Institute, 2014). One third of the total amount of Arab-Americans live in California, New York, and Michigan (Arab American Institute, 2014). Ethnic Arab neighborhoods began to appear shortly after the first wave of Arab migrants arrived in select cities within the United States, but most notable is Dearborn, Michigan (Wingfield, 2006; Abi-Hashem, 2008). Arab-Americans first went to Dearborn for the automobile factories, and now 30% of the Arab-American population resides there (Wingfield, 2006; Abi-Hashem, 2008). The Arab American Institute (2014) estimated that there were 223,075 Arab-Americans in the state of Michigan as of 2014. Among new Arab immigrants, their preferred state destination is Michigan (Abi-Hashem, 2008). Many studies on the health of Arab-Americans are based out of the Detroit Metropolitan Area, given its high concentration of Arab American communities (Abdulrahim & Baker, 2009).

Self-perception and how some individuals feel others view them are important ways one understands his/her cultural values within the context of their lives. Rousseau et al. (2011) found no significant differences by gender in perception of discrimination among Arab participants in their study. Another finding in Rousseau et al.'s (2011) study was that regardless of religious group, Arab participants' perception of discrimination increased from 1998-2007 from nearly 26% to 39%. The visibility of an immigrant group is directly correlated with the amount of discrimination towards the group, and the amount of discrimination experienced by the minority group can affect the amount of self-image issues an individual has (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000). A greater amount of discrimination experienced is correlated with a lower amount of trust for

authorities, and this often means that occurrences such as hate crimes or discriminatory acts are not reported for fear of negative consequences such as stigma, leaving researchers with no statistical data (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Wingfield, 2006). Naturally, the norms of a country are established by the dominant groups, making Arab-Americans feel that they live in a country where they have little to no existence in the cultural system of the United States (Wingfield, 2006). This is especially true for Arab-Americans when they are the target of violence such as death threats, physical assaults, and murder (Wingfield, 2006).

Researchers believe that not only actual discrimination but also perceived discrimination and perceived prejudice can be related to mental health concerns (Moradi & Hasan, 2004). Perceived discrimination is related to psychological distress for not just Arab-Americans but any hyphenated American (Aprahamian, Kaplan, Windham, Sutter, & Visser, 2011). Most of the data available on acculturation and health of immigrants originates with studies completed on Latino-Americans (Abdulrahim & Baker, 2009). Muslim Arab-Americans report less psychological distress than non-Muslim Arab-Americans (Rousseau et al., 2011). However, one study found that CAAs are more likely to identify with the Westerners' individualistic split of the mind and spirit and demonstrate better mental health than Muslim Arab-Americans because the nature of Islam hesitates to adopt individual interpretations (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, 2014). Al-Krenawi and Jackson (2014) suggest Muslims may use prayer and increased practice in the Pillars of Islam as healing and coping methods when experiencing problems such as illness or marriage issues. CAAs are more likely to accept individual interpretations



whereas Muslim Arab-Americans are hesitant and consider well-being to be mind and spirit tied together (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, 2014).

Negative stereotypes brought upon by the mass media in the United States make Arab-Americans' culture feel exposed, causing them more discomfort when adapting to the host culture (Aprahamian et al., 2011; Naber 2000). The struggle to overcome stereotypes occurs because stereotypes are resistant to change, oversimplified, exaggerated, and overgeneralized (Jandt, 2016). Discrimination records in the United States for Arab-Americans are difficult to locate due to the ethnic category they must identify as. Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) studied Arab immigrants' discrimination experiences in Finland. Their results showed that the Arab immigrants' reports of mistrust for authorities, length of time in Finland, and perceived discrimination accounted for nearly 50% of the variance in psychological distress (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000). Unlike the other immigrant groups in the study, Arab immigrants had more variance in psychological distress and psychological symptoms because of discrimination (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000).

Discriminatory experiences can impact the acculturation process and can lead to mental health responses such as depression, anxiety, and in the case of 9/11, trauma (Aprahamian et al., 2011). Abdulrahim et al.'s (2012) study found that CAAs reported higher levels of discrimination-distress than Muslim Arab-Americans. According to Padela and Heisler (2010), 30% of Arab-Americans reported discrimination in the eight months following the terror attacks, which also affected physiological stress. The higher

levels of discrimination that immigrants experience lead to higher levels of distrust in the new country and increased adverse health. However, when an individual can satisfy the expectations of both original and host countries, they have better health outcomes (Samari, 2016). Health outcomes of immigrants are believed by researchers to be better when there are lower levels of acculturative stress and a greater amount of social support (Abdulrahim & Baker, 2009).

For the Arab culture, health and religion are strongly intertwined. “A common response to the question: “How is your health?” comes in the generic form: “Thanks to God, it is fine” (Abdulrahim & Baker, 2009, p. 2102). Though Padela and Heisler (2010) state that more research needs to be conducted, they found that religious affiliation for Arab-Americans had no effect on the amount of psychological distress, levels of happiness, and health status. However, Abdulrahim and Baker (2009) found that the physical health of Arab-Americans is worse because of acculturative stress experienced when they have low English language skills or prefer communicating in Arabic. Few studies examine language as a factor to acculturation and health of immigrants (Abdulrahim & Baker, 2009).

Padela and Heisler (2010) found that both Muslim and Christian Arab-Americans had no differences, and both reported equal amounts of the effects of perceived abuse and bad experiences related to their race, ethnicity, or religion after 9/11. However, Awad (2010) found that Muslims reported more perceived discrimination than CAAs. Because religious affiliation was found to be a solid determinant of perceived discrimination

(Awad, 2010), religiosity for CAAs can act as a safeguard against acculturative stress. Acculturative stress can be defined as the feeling of identity loss and remoteness resulting from the contact with the larger society in which one is adapting, which shifts from one's prior day-to-day functions (Berry, 1992). In other words, stress as a result of the acculturation process can lead to mental health problems such as feelings of marginalization (Berry 1997; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000). Psycho-social problems and the medium risk for experiencing anxiety would lead professionals to recommend self-help material or counseling, and in some cases, anti-suicidal counseling (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, 2014). However, professional help is not sought out often by Arab-Americans because they may feel that social workers, counselors, and other professionals will not understand them (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, 2014). More research is needed to fill the gap on the psychological literature on Arab-Americans and the role of discriminatory experiences and prejudice has on this group (Moradi & Hasan, 2004).

#### *1.3.4 Discrimination in the Media*

The United States mainstream media coverage of Arab-Americans was negative even prior to 9/11 (Muhtaseb & Frey, 2008). Arabs have been presented in American media in stereotypical fashions since the 1930s (Abouchedid & Nasser, 2006). The stereotypes of Arabs are constantly bolstered by books, films, and other mass media by sensationalizing information biases against Arabs (Abouchedid & Nasser, 2006). If media is not showing Arabs as terrorists, they are shown as having an unconventional culture linked to Islam, which is shown as a suppressed religion (Oh, 2008). According to Faragallah et al. (1997), discrimination including stereotyping Arabs as wealthy, terrorist,

or anti-Jewish is more tolerated in the United States than discrimination against other minority groups. Films by Hollywood post-9/11 depicted Arabs as belly dancers, wealthy oil Sheikhs, and desert tent-dwellers, reinforcing the existing stereotypes, bias, and inaccurate media portrayals (Abouchedid & Nasser, 2006). Other stereotypical media portrayals depict Arab-Americans as uncivilized and irresponsible with the ways they spend money (Muhtaseb & Frey, 2008).

El-Farra's 1996 article points out the news media's use of the words terrorists, extremists, and fanatics when describing Arabs, and she further states that identifying Arabs with terrorism is to classify them as enemies (p.1). American news media describe the Arab World as a "region of conflict" because important details are left out or manipulated in the coverage of the Arab World (Abouchedid & Nasser, 2006, p. 205). Arab-Americans are depicted as the "other" group in media, and this negative representation can lead newly immigrated Arab-Americans to believe that the United States is not tolerant of their heritage (Oh, 2008).

One barrier CAAs may face is when others assume similarity instead of difference (Jandt, 2016). For example, if a non-Arab has little to no information about Arab culture, they may assume that no differences exist between Arab and American culture (Jandt, 2016). Being unaware of major cultural differences can result in an intercultural miscommunication (Jandt, 2016). Similarly, assuming differences instead of similarities can lead individuals to disregard shared aspects that may be important to both cultures (Jandt, 2016).

Another barrier to intercultural communication is ethnocentrism, which is to evaluate other cultural groups according to the values of one's own cultural group (Jandt, 2016). Often Western media and other Western entities influence control on making the Middle East modernized and make it an objective for Arab women to reject their Arab culture to become more like women with American values (Mishra, 2007). Oh (2008) conceptualized "otherness" as any activity that Arab-Americans do that is not a typical aspect of the host country. Even textbooks from the 1990s were found problematic in the description of Arabs, Arab countries, and religions (Wingfield, 2006). Significant changes need to be made to school curricula which will more adequately represent Middle Eastern studies (Wingfield, 2006).

Some media entities do not even make the distinction between "Arab" and "Muslim" and use the words interchangeably (Weston, 2003). Just like stereotyping, CAAs can also experience prejudice because of the way Arabs are portrayed in the media. Because Dearborn, Michigan is one of the largest Arab-American communities, it is subject to intense media attention (Abdulrahim & Baker, 2009). Abouchedid and Nasser (2006) suggest including Arab-Americans in the mainstream media as entertainers, newscasters, and show hosts in order to overcome the stereotypical attitudes and suggest that more research is needed to remove prejudice against Arabs. Arab-Americans seek alternative media platforms because the mainstream traditional media in the United States use stereotypes and harshly criticize Arab-Americans (Muhtaseb & Frey, 2008). Arab-Americans seek coverage of information that is important to them via the internet perhaps, because the internet is not regulated (Muhtaseb & Frey, 2008).

The role of religiosity, perceived discrimination, and the theoretical background prompted the following research questions:

RQ 1) To what extent does Christian Arab-Americans' religiosity affect the participants' acculturation mode?

RQ 2) To what extent does perceived discrimination against Christian Arab-Americans influence the participants' acculturation mode?

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODS

Participants for this study were recruited from a church located in Fort Worth, Texas. The church serves a large population of Christian Arab-Americans in the Dallas-Fort Worth area of Texas. According to a 2015 study by the Arab American Institute Foundation, 124,117 Arab-Americans reside in Texas, making it the fifth largest state by Arab-American population. Dallas and Tarrant Counties are among the top five counties in Texas where Arab-Americans can be found. This church consists of people from a cross-section of Arab countries including Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. The method used to gain detailed insight into the acculturative processes of this cohort was in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted by the researcher, who is an in-group member with easy access to this population. The researcher is a first-generation Arab-American born in the United States to parents who are/were foreign-born naturalized citizens of the United States. The number of participants in this study was 10; interviews were conducted until saturation was reached. Participants were recruited through fliers (see Appendix A) placed in multiple areas of the church including the announcement bulletin board, located in an area where members congregate to socialize after Sunday services. The Pastor of the church made announcements about the study to the congregation as another method of recruiting participants. Participants consisted of individuals whose ages range from 35-55 years old. This age range was chosen so that participants were at least 18 years of age when the 9/11 attacks occurred. The upper limit of 55 was chosen because the majority of the church consists of members

within this 20-year range. Participants were first-generation Arab-Americans who have resided in the United States for a minimum of 5 years. A minimum of 5 years was required so that the participants had an adequate amount of time in the United States to learn about American culture and because legal residents can apply for United States citizenship after 5 years of having a green card. The interviews were conducted in the conference room of the church. Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions to understand each participant's acculturative experiences on a holistic level. Questions also probed the extent to which Christian Arab-Americans perceive discrimination against themselves (see Appendix B).

After transcribing each interview, the information gathered was analyzed using a thematic analysis. According to Clarke and Braun (2017), a thematic analysis is a qualitative method for "identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data" (p.6). Identifying patterns/themes captured items with considerable attention or prevalent meaning across the entire data set of transcripts. Finding recurring themes and creating categories within these themes found in the data also assisted in answering the research questions. The researcher conducted the thematic analysis through the step-by-step framework as described by Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017). Nowell et al.'s (2017) six-step reflective method consists of familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The purpose of using Nowell et al.'s (2017) method is to establish trustworthiness during each phase of the analysis, and it is helpful when interpreting rich data.



Berry's acculturation model is viewed as a categorical model; however, for the purpose of this study, LaFromboise et al.'s five subcategories were added and the term bicultural competence is used to describe an individual who identifies successfully with both cultures. If a participant was categorized as using Berry's integration strategy, the researcher determined which one of the five types of biculturalism best fits each participant. Values Coding was used in this study to generate initial codes, search for themes, review the themes, and to define and name the themes as outlined by Nowell et al.'s (2017) framework. Saldaña (2013) states values coding is used for studies that "explore cultural values and belief systems, identity, intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions" (p. 132). Values coding considers three aspects of the participant's worldview, which include values, attitudes, and beliefs (Saldaña, 2013). According to Saldaña (2013), the following are the definitions for the three aspects: 1) Values- "the importance the participant attributes to themselves, another person, thing, or ideas" (p.131), 2) Attitudes- "the way the participant thinks/feels about themselves, another person, thing, or idea" (p. 131), 3) Beliefs- includes "values and attitudes, plus the participant's personal knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals, and religious perceptions of the social world" (p.132).

The semi-structured interviews, lasting approximately one hour, were audio-recorded. All participants were asked about their experiences migrating to the United States, their views on discrimination toward Christian Arab-Americans, and 9/11. The audio-recordings were transcribed to include pauses and laughter. The data was coded using a combination of inductive and deductive thematic analysis. While the data

collected was coded using an existing coding framework (deductive), the themes identified were also strongly linked to the data themselves (inductive) (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Nowel et al, 2017).

The interviews were conducted in English as this is the researcher's first language, and a translator would have been required to accurately transcribe the interviews from Arabic to English, possibly leading to confidentiality issues with data handling. The second reason the interviews were conducted in English is because, as researchers have pointed out, the ability of the participant to speak the host language can indicate their influence by the host country (Abdulrahim & Baker, 2009). The interviews were conducted in the conference room of the church where only the researcher and the interviewee were present. Recordings and transcriptions were kept under the University's J-Drive, which is a secure personal network storage space provided for each student. In order to keep participants confidential, individuals were allocated pseudonyms. Pseudonyms were assigned by using common Christian Arabic names that have the same amount of letters as the participants' real names. The researcher felt that keeping confidentiality of the participants would allow them to disclose more information about their personal experiences and build a relationship of trust between the researcher and the participants.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

First, the data was analyzed to determine the acculturation mode of each participant based off their answers from the interviews. Participants were asked to explain what they like more about the host culture than their home culture. Follow-up questions allowed the researcher to determine the extent to which the participant included such aspects into their daily lives. Participants were probed to find what aspects of their home culture they liked more than the host culture. Also, by discovering the attitudes the participants have toward the original and host cultures, the researcher determined the acculturation mode for each participant.

The results show that CAAs favor aspects of both Arab and American cultures as most participants' acculturation mode was integration. In other words, the participants' attitudes toward both cultures were positive, and they maintained their original cultural identity and adapted to the host culture (Berry, 1997). Though there are some aspects of both cultures that participants disliked, the acculturation strategy that each participant identified best with was integration because each participant maintained his or her home culture during the process of adapting to the host culture. All but one participant revealed they maintained their home culture while adapting to the host culture. The one participant who did not show the integration strategy only maintained their home culture and rejected the host culture. While all participants maintained relationships with other CAAs while living in the United States, one participant did not show any desire to adapt to the host culture, resulting in the acculturation strategy of separation.

Data was examined for participants who categorized under the integration strategy to determine which subcategory they belong to. Analysis showed that the participants are competent in both the majority culture and their culture of origin, making them biculturally competent. None of the participants under the integration strategy lost touch with their home culture and therefore did not categorize as the subcategory assimilated. The participants did not describe their home culture as superior to the host culture, nor did they describe the host culture as hierarchal to their home culture, and for this reason, the subcategory of acculturation and assimilation did not fit these participants. The fusion model assumes the home and host culture will fuse together to become one indistinguishable new culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993). However, after understanding the extent to which participants maintain aspects of their home culture, it seems clear that the Arab culture and the American culture are so dissimilar that participants cannot fuse the two cultures together. Aspects of both the host culture and the home culture are clearly distinguishable in the lives of the participants. However, they are not two distinct cultures, and there are some instances where participants overlap or combine the two cultures. In other words, the participants did not exhibit two distinct cultures that exist together at the same time and therefore do not categorize as the multicultural subcategory.

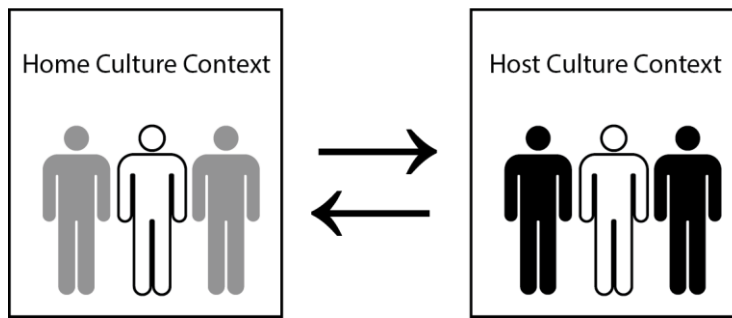


Figure 3-1 LaFromboise et al.'s Alternation Model

### 3.1 Alternation Model

Because the participants associated with both the host culture and their home culture, the nine participants fit into the alternation model (see Figure 3-1). The researcher created Figure 3-1 to represent LaFromboise et al.'s alternation model by using similar illustrations to those used in Berry's Acculturation Model in Figure 1-4. Figure 3-1 shows a participant having the ability to move back and forth between their original culture and the culture of the host country depending on the context, as were nine of the ten participants in this study (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Most of the participants described the importance of spending time with family, and many described spending time with other CAAs. Participating in Bible study groups or church events shows the participants' ability to be successful in home culture contexts. When participants include aspects of the host culture in their everyday lives, describe working in the host culture, or participate in other host culture contexts, this shows the ability to be successful in the host culture. Additional themes identified in the interviews are grouped according to Saldaña's (2013) values coding of values, attitudes, and beliefs. Information that may help provide context about the participants is located in Table 3-1 (see next page).

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Length of Residence in the U.S.</b>	<b>Citizenship</b>
<b>Vera</b>	Jordan	47	28	Yes
<b>Adel</b>	Jordan	41	14	Yes
<b>Laila</b>	Jordan	35	8	Yes
<b>Miriam</b>	Lebanon	53	18	Yes
<b>Farah</b>	Jordan	50	31	Yes
<b>Najwa</b>	Syria	52	12	Yes
<b>Wesam</b>	Jordan	51	21	Yes
<b>Rita</b>	Palestine	48	22	Yes
<b>Hanan</b>	Jordan	36	8	Yes
<b>Zein</b>	Lebanon	48	30	Yes

Table 3-1 Participants' Demographics

### 3.2 Values

According to Saldaña (2013), values are “the importance the participant attributes to themselves, another person, thing, or ideas. They are the principles, moral codes, and situational norms people live by” (p. 131). Patterns and themes found under values coding fall into two areas of family ties and the value they have for the people whom they spend most of their time with.

#### *3.2.1 Who CAAs Spend Time With*

When participants were asked with whom they spend the most time other than their immediate family, none of the participants could name just one person. All participants described a group of people, usually other CAAs affiliated with the church or other religious groups such as Bible study groups that they spend the most time with. Vera said of the people she spends the most time with, “Well I have church friends and we meet together a lot”. Even after the researcher probed for a single person they spent the most time with, some participants asserted that they knew a lot of people at work or

elsewhere but could not list one person and rather described a group of individuals with whom they spend the most time. Like many other participants, Miriam stated, “I don't have one person,” and Farah stated, “I can't think of any one person”. This finding strongly coincides with the collectivist dimension of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimension of “Individualism vs. Collectivism”. The participants emphasized community relationships and belonging to a particular group.

### *3.2.2 Family Ties*

When asked what aspects of their host culture they prefer over American culture, all participants answered to some degree about the importance of family ties. Some participants explained that it is common in their native country to have guests (family or friends) arrive at any time of the day to visit without prior arrangements. After they lived in the United States, they found that this did not occur; American customs call for arranging visiting times, and the participants described this positively. At the same time, they felt that American culture does not put enough importance into family ties.

Examples of closer family ties in their home culture included living with their parents during college or after the age of 18, more support from family to “stay true to your roots”, and sitting together as a family for meals.

In the interviews, Vera and Wesam both highlighted the importance of family connection and how they include this in their lives today and instill in their children the importance of family ties. Wesam said, “I have a close relationship with my family.... We have a really big family here, and we are very connected to each other. We’re always

together”. Though it was not a requirement of this study, all of the participants have children, and all participants mentioned their children in some form during the interview.

There are many similarities in the ways the participants described raising their children in America. Vera said:

“...when I raise my kids, I say we want the best, we want the Christian way. That’s what most of my focus is on and that’s what we go with. It’s not like we are Arab and live the Arab way or if we are in the U.S. and we live the American way. I tried to take the best of both cultures and apply it to my home”.

Miriam and Hanan felt similar to Vera by stating that they tell their children to keep what is good from the Arab culture and take what is good from the American culture in order to thrive. However, Adel and Laila described raising their children with all Arab culture. Laila described raising her children as follows:

“...it always goes back to how kids are raised. So, we raise them our way which is to learn what the Bible says, learn how we think, everything Jordanian like that they have to listen to us, stay with us, and stick with family”.

### 3.3 Attitudes

According to Saldaña (2013), attitudes are “the way the participant thinks/feels about themselves, another person, thing, or idea” (p. 131). Attitudes are a process of reflecting, reacting, or evaluating upon things one has learned or experienced (Saldaña,



2013). Patterns and themes found under values coding of attitudes are indicative of the way CAAs think and/or feel about 9/11, America, and American culture.

### *3.3.1 9/11*

Few participants felt that 9/11 had personally changed their lives. However, two participants felt that it “probably changed the lives of Muslims”. Some participants described how travelling had changed before and after 9/11; however, they went on to say that it did not personally change their lives. Other participants described the day of the event and had friends, neighbors, pastors, and family reaching out to them for support and checking on them. Wesam recalled non-Arab friends reaching out to “make sure everything was okay” but also stated “sometimes you feel that the Arabs in general are treated different than before” and then reaffirmed that 9/11 had not personally changed anything. Miriam felt that because the neighbors and the community knew her and her family as CAAs that it did not cause any problems, but she knew about friends whose children were in college and were targeted. Similarly, Rita described an individual who was a Muslim Pakistani-American gas station owner who was attacked and hospitalized following 9/11. Rita stated that neither she nor her children had any personal problems after 9/11.

Hanan and Zein are among the only participants that felt that 9/11 changed their lives in the United States. Hanan described how 9/11 changed the way she identifies herself to others:

“I feel that it [9/11] changed my life because if anybody asks me where I am from, I am nervous to say that I am from Jordan. I am scared that they

will think I am the reason. I love to say that I am from Jordan, but I feel like sometimes people that are not Arab will think differently of me because of that. I always like to say that I am Christian and then when I say that I'm Christian, they give me a different reaction”.

Zein was living in New York the day of the 9/11 attacks and felt personally affected by the event. Zein sought refuge in the United States from war in the Middle East. After 9/11, Zein became emotional when describing the feeling that “their new home” (the United States) was no longer safe either. Zein said:

“When 9/11 happened it made me so sad. The United States is my country and the sorrow I felt was equal to how I used to feel when I was in Lebanon. Every time I talk about it [9/11] it's just very hard, but I felt like this is my home and my home is not safe anymore..... this was my safety net”.

### *3.3.2 What Makes CAAs Uncomfortable*

For four of the participants, romantic relationships at a young age and premarital sex were among the aspects of American culture that made them feel uncomfortable. Two of the participants backed their views by tying into their religious beliefs, stating “that is not what God told us to do” and “that is not what the Bible says”. Hanan explained discomfort about the possibility that one of their children in the future may bring home a boyfriend one day but also further stated that maybe “by the time they get older, I will feel okay with this”.

### *3.3.3 What CAAs like about the United States*

#### 3.3.3.1 Freedom

When speaking about what they like about American culture, six participants described different aspects of freedom. Laila and Farah described freedom as the freedom to wear whatever you want, even “leaving the house in your pajamas” as Laila described.

Though, Laila went on to say:

“I still can’t wear the same things they do here because I don’t feel comfortable to wear that stuff. I think it’s something we were raised on so you can’t change it even after a few years or after all of my life....but I am okay being around people wearing whatever they want. I don’t complain”.

Farah described freedom as not being criticized for personal actions or decisions. Farah said, “The first thing that comes to mind, and I know this is a cliché, is freedom. Freedom to go wherever you want and do what you like without being criticized”. Vera and Wesam used the term “interfere” to describe the way they liked how American culture does not allow others to interfere with their decisions, unlike their home culture. Vera said, “One thing I appreciate here [the United States] is nobody interferes in your life, so you can do what you want. You can live your life as you want and nobody will interfere with your life”. Wesam said, “I like that people here don't interfere with everybody else’s business”. Wesam and Najwa spoke of freedom in general and felt that there was freedom in every aspect of American culture. Najwa said, “There is freedom in everything here [the United States]. Freedom is big and rewarding not like in Syria”. Both Adel and Rita described the freedom to speak as an aspect of freedom that they

appreciated in American culture. Rita said, “I like that in America, I have to freedom to speak”, while Adel said, “you can say whatever you want to say”. Adel and Hanan both described freedom to practice religion in the United States as a positive aspect of American culture. Hanan explained that she could “feel the difference” between living in a Muslim country and living in the United States where “there’s nothing pressuring me”.

#### 3.3.3.2 Equality

Adel and Zein described equality as an aspect of American culture they liked. Adel gave an example and compared meeting someone in their home country versus meeting someone in the United States. When connecting with someone from the home country who was of a different religion, Adel described them as “acting different” and “treating me different” but did not feel treated differently when meeting people from other religions in the United States. Adel tied this into the laws of the United States by explaining that all people are treated equally and everyone from the President down must obey the laws. Zein gave an example comparing law in their home country and law in the United States.

“If two people were going to a bank in Lebanon and one person had ten dollars and the other had three million, the person with more money can skip the line. I don’t like that. Over here, you could be the person with three million dollars and you would stand in line behind the person with ten dollars. It’s first come first serve, and I think that’s a good thing”.

### 3.3.3.3 Honesty

Adel, Laila, and Rita felt that people are more honest in the United States compared to people in their home country. All three participants described honesty in the United States as telling people the truth directly whereas Adel and Laila described their home country as telling the truth to your face but when you turn your back the truth changes or becomes different. Laila said, “They [Americans] are honest to each other and we’re [Arabs] honest to each other, but in a different way”. Similarly, Adel said:

“The truth is, in Jordan it’s not the same. People there tell you something and when you turn your back, they tell others something else. The people over here are honest, and that’s the thing I like most about the people here”.

### 3.3.4 CAAs and their Connection to the United States

Some participants felt connected to the United States before migrating while others described their connection after arriving to the host country. One participant could not state the exact moment a connection was formed. Rita and Zein felt connected to the United States even before ever entering the country. Zein described the American flight attendant on the plane as welcoming, awesome, and happy, which made this participant “feel at home”. Zein said, “It was then that I was really happy. I didn’t even land in the states and I hadn’t even applied for citizenship yet, but I already felt like I was home”. Rita was around American teachers growing up in school in her home country and after migrating to the United States felt that “everything was supporting this homey feeling”. Four participants described feeling connected to the United States right away. Farah said,

“I never felt homesick” and suggested that this was due to staying busy with family and work. Wesam, who has many family members in the United States, felt that “wherever my family lives is where I feel my home is”. Vera described feeling connected to the United States once enrolled in an English language class after migrating to the United States because other students were from differing backgrounds: “They were all like me and so we connected and started being friends”. Laila and Hanan only felt connected to the United States after having their children. Hanan felt “my kids make me feel like this is my home”. Najwa could not say the exact moment she felt connected to the United States but described the connection to the United States as “growing”.

### 3.4 Beliefs

According to Saldaña (2013), beliefs include values and attitudes, plus the participant’s personal knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals, and religious perceptions of the social world (p.132). Social interactions and involvement in cultural or religious institutions can shape, change, and preserve beliefs (Saldaña, 2013). Patterns and themes found under values coding of beliefs are indicative of the difficulties experienced by CAAs, including language difficulties, difficulties at work, and discrimination.

#### *3.4.1 Reasons for Migrating to the United States*

Three patterns emerged among the participants’ main reason for coming to the United States: refuge, marriage, and to seek a better life. Participants who originated from Lebanon sought refuge from the Civil War in Lebanon. Zein described the main reason for coming to the United States as “we moved here so we could stay alive....basically to

survive and not die”. Female participants who originated from Arab countries other than Lebanon stated that the main reason for coming to the United States was because of marriage. A pattern emerged among most female participants whose significant others already resided in the United States prior to marriage. The participants were married in their home country and followed their spouses by migrating to the United States in order to live with their spouse. Similar to other female participants, one participant said:

“My husband studied here in the United States and he lived here for 10 years before we got married. We got married in the Middle East and he brought me here for a visit. I liked it and then I decided to move here”.

Finally, the third reason participants migrated to the United States was to seek a better life for themselves and their children. One participant described the main reason for coming to the United States as follows: “It was my dream to come to the United States since I was ten years old because you have more opportunities, a different life, and freedom”.

#### *3.4.2 The American Dream and The Melting Pot*

Half of the participants spoke highly of the opportunities in the United States. Farah described this as: “Here, you know, the doors are open for you if you’re determined. If you know what your goal is, you can reach it. It’s all up to you”. Similarly, Miriam described opportunities in America as:

“I love in the American culture that if you put a goal, there is always a way to get to your goal. With our culture, there is lots of walls and obstacles. If you put a goal and try multiple times, you cannot get to your goal”.

When describing aspects of American culture that they liked, Vera and Rita mentioned a plural society or people from different backgrounds. Rita stated: “I like the plural society. There are lots of people from everywhere. I never thought that I would meet or live with people from all over the world”.

None of the participants had any immediate or long-term plans to move back to their country of origin. All but two participants have returned to their country of origin at least once but only to visit. Similar to many of the other participants, Miriam said, “I have been back multiple times and the last time I went was last year. I am also going next summer to visit”. The two participants who have not returned to their home country said they would only return to visit. One participant said, “I have no plans of going back. I plan to live in the United States. If I go to Jordan, it would be just to visit”.

### *3.4.3 CAAs and their Religiosity*

All but two participants mentioned God, the Bible, a pastor, or their religious beliefs when telling their story about migrating to the United States. Vera described what was most helpful when moving to the United States as “plugging into a church”, and Miriam felt that the church played a huge role in the reason for thriving in the United States. Miriam said, “I was only here [the United States] about 3 or 4 months when I went to a church. I looked at their bulletin and found that they pray early in the morning, like we do in Lebanon”. This church offered to help watch Miriam’s daughter, who was three years old at the time, while Miriam studied to pass the test for the Board of Nursing. Miriam said, “It was a great experience. I studied for five or six months and then I passed the board the first time I tested. It was all glory to God”. For two of the participants,



attending a church and meeting other Christians was a positive experience, but they went on further to state that when they began attending their current church with other Arabs, they had an even more positive experience and described feeling happier. Zein said this about attending church: “We go to church every Sunday and then every other Sunday there’s Bible study”. Laila described her experience with attending church:

“We used to go to a Catholic church and they all speak English.... It’s a different culture there. Then we found another church and they speak Arabic, and they teach the kids a little bit of Arabic, too... We spend time with the people there, and we are happy right now”.

#### *3.4.4 CAAs and Language Difficulties*

All participants mentioned language as a difficult aspect of their experiences in the United States. Adel completed college in his home country and had majored in the English language. Even after migrating to the United States, Adel felt that there were differences in the English they learned and the English that is spoken in the United States. Adel recalled an experience related to their language as follows: “When I started talking to people, they didn’t understand and said that I needed to go back because I didn’t speak English very well”.

Along with Adel, four other participants all described learning the English language at school in their home country yet still described difficulties with language during the beginning of their experiences in the United States. One participant felt that the English language in America had a “different accent” than the English they were taught in their home country. Another participant described the reason for having

difficulties with spelling in English. This participant learned both French and English in school and would spell and speak English words in a “French manner” after coming to the United States.

Laila felt that her own language deficiency was a factor that would not allow her to raise her children with the Arab culture. Laila gave the example of taking her daughter to the park and feeling the fear that if someone asked her a question, she would not be able to communicate to that person in English. Laila further elaborated that if she could not answer a simple question from a stranger, then how would she be able to raise her daughter with Arab values when her daughter only speaks English. This is one of the reasons Laila felt the need to practice her English language skills. Laila emphasized that learning the language was the hardest part of adjusting to life in the United States.

#### *3.4.5 Discrimination*

In total, five participants firmly stated that they had not experienced discrimination in the United States, three participants described discrimination in their place of employment, and two participants described discrimination in other parts of the interview, but when asked if they were discriminated against, they said they had not experienced discrimination. When speaking of their first experiences in the United States, three participants spoke of difficulties they faced in the work environment. The participants explained a possible reason why they experienced unfair treatment at work. Miriam is a nurse in a hospital and described the reason she did not feel welcome in the work environment as follows:

“In their mind they thought I didn’t know much. Even though I passed the board and they don’t think I know much. They were right about me not knowing the culture..... They thought I was not going to know how to do it and not connect to the culture.....but I learned how to cope with this situation. I learned how to take it from their perspective”.

Laila also explained why instances at work occurred by stating that others thought she didn’t know:

“Some people thought that because I am new that I didn’t know and would do anything. They asked me to do things every time and I don’t say no even if I know that it’s not my responsibility. I do it but feel bad after a while”.

Miriam also described an experience with a patient at the hospital. “I’ve been through a tough time; I mean it hurts when a patient says I don’t want you to be my nurse because you’re from Lebanon”. Zein described an incident at work and recalled: “I experienced it first-hand and felt that I was bullied at work...there was no other person to see that I was being discriminated against...I was appalled”.

Another participant may have experienced discrimination outside of the workplace, but the participant did not see the actions as discrimination. Farah and a friend were at the check-out in a store when an individual working at the store was saying what the friend felt was mean racist comments towards the participant. Farah described a few similar circumstances where a friend pointed out what was believed to be an act of discrimination or racism towards the participant. The participant said, “I did not see

it....I questioned what made my friend think so”. Farah went on further to say “maybe it’s my personality. I’ve always seen the good in people and I always think even if somebody is being mean to me that it has nothing to do with me”.

When participants responded that they had not experienced discrimination in the United States, they were asked if they had known someone who had experienced discrimination in the United States. Two participants described someone they knew who had experienced discrimination that was of another minority group, both of which were of Latino descent.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

This study applied the theoretical framework for Berry's acculturation model and LaFromboise et al.'s (1993) model of second-culture acquisition to determine each participant's acculturation strategy. The study was conducted to understand the extent to which religiosity/perceived discrimination against CAAs affect/influence the participant's acculturation mode. Based on the findings, most CAA acculturate using the integration strategy. Of the nine participants who used the integration strategy, all of them also fit the subcategory of alternation. Other than language barriers in the beginning of their acculturation experiences, the participants did not describe a high amount of stress or anxiety. As Laframboise et al. (1993) suggest, individuals who categorize in the alternation model successfully alternate between the two cultures depending on the context and feel less stress.

#### 4.1 Religiosity and Acculturation

Values coding was used to categorize the extent to which religiosity affected the participant's acculturation mode. When the participants used terms such as God, Bible, Church, Pastor, Religion, Christian, etc. to answer the researcher's questions about their experiences, this helped the researcher understand the extent to which religiosity affected the acculturation mode of the participants. Nearly all participants used terms of religiosity to explain their personal experiences. All participants named other CAAs, people from the church, and people from Bible groups as those they spend most of their time with. As

suggested by Samari (2016), CAAs rely on attendance to religious services to maintain social contact with their home country. Religiosity was present in values coding of values, attitudes, and beliefs for all but two participants. The researcher believes that participants wished to retain aspects of their home culture and found others with similar goals in the church. By maintaining social contact with CAAs who had been in the United States for a longer amount of time, this helped participants understand the host culture and become biculturally competent. Therefore, the answer to RQ 1 (To what extent does Christian Arab-Americans' religiosity affect the participants' acculturation mode?) is: Based on the research, religiosity has a large impact on the acculturation mode of CAAs.

#### 4.2 Perceived Discrimination and Acculturation

By using values coding, it was possible to categorize the factors that influenced the participants' perceived discrimination against themselves and another CAA. Values coding of beliefs includes both attitudes and values plus the participants' experiences. When participants used terms such as treated differently, not equal, unfair, hurt, etc. to answer the researcher's question about their experiences, this helped the researcher understand the extent to which perceived discrimination influenced the acculturation mode of the participants. Only three participants knew they had experienced discrimination in the first few years after migrating to the United States, and all three described this experience occurring at their place of employment. Two of these three participants categorized as integration while one categorized as separation. It was apparent to the researcher that the two participants who experienced discrimination and

categorized as integration were able to overcome these events and become competent in the host culture. For the participant who falls under the separation category, perceived discrimination was not the only aspect of rejecting the host culture that the researcher determined to influence the acculturation mode. Other aspects influencing this participant's acculturation mode include the way this participant described the extent to which she retains her home culture, includes a very minuscule amount of aspects of American culture in her life now, and chose to raise her children with only the home culture.

Though Adel described an incident where he was told to "go back" because he didn't speak English very well, when asked if Adel experienced discrimination in the United States, he responded that he had not. Similar instances with one other participant occurred where they described discrimination or racism during the portion of the interview where they discussed their acculturative experience. However, when asked if they experienced discrimination in the United States, they responded that they had not. Most of the participants may want to present their lives as free from discrimination because they don't want to disturb the harmony and portray their lives as being part of the in-group (Hofstede, 2011). The participants described their experiences as happening so far in the past (usually during the first few years after immigrating to the United States), and after telling their discrimination experiences, they would tell how they moved along and how it was no longer an issue in their lives. For this reason, it seems that the participants did not consider the way they were treated as a form of discrimination. Therefore, the answer to RQ 2 (To what extent does perceived discrimination against

Christian Arab-Americans influence the participants' acculturation mode?) is: Because the majority of the participants stated that they had not experienced discrimination, the researcher discovered that perceived discrimination against CAAs does not influence the participant's acculturation mode. Because most participants who categorized as integration did not feel discriminated against and most participants felt welcomed in the United States, they did not exude feelings of isolation, nor did they describe one culture as superior to the other. For this reason, assimilated was eliminated as a subcategory that CAAs belong to. Rather, alternation was the best subcategory to describe CAAs.

#### 4.3 Additional Findings

Defining success in culture can be different for each individual. None of the participants had plans to move back to their country of origin and for this reason, the researcher felt that the participants viewed their lives in the United States as successful and were satisfied with their decision to live in the United States. For the researcher and the majority of the participants, success in culture means that an individual accepts aspects of a host culture and integrates these aspects into their daily lives but also retains and integrates aspects of the home culture. However, for one participant, success in culture means to accept aspects of American culture and choose not to integrate those aspects, but rather prefers to maintain and integrate aspects of their home culture.

It is uncertain if some of the participants' discomfort with young romantic relationships and premarital sex can be attributed entirely to the participant's home culture or to their religious beliefs. Though participants held beliefs where they disfavored some aspects of American culture, they did not seem conflicted on their



cultural identity in general. The parental views of some participants, especially among participants with younger children, seemed to be somewhat challenged by the disfavored aspects of American culture. Some participants did not always seem firm about the ways they would raise their children regarding these disfavored aspects and whether they would address these aspects using the host or the home culture.

It seems that some of the difficulties the participants described (language and feeling a connection to the United States) were due to who the participants spent most of their time with, how long they resided in the United States, and the amount of family that lived near the participants. One reason participants have so many difficulties learning the English language is because CAAs are spending most of their time with other CAAs and resort to using their native language, causing them to not practice English as much. Of all participants in the study, Laila, Najwa, and Hanan resided in the United States the least amount of time. The researcher believes that Najwa described her connection with the United States as “growing” because compared to the majority of participants, she has not resided in the United States as long. Also, the researcher feels that Laila and Hanan felt that they only began to have connections to the United States after having children due in part to the shorter amount of time they have lived in the United States and because both participants only have family from their spouses’ side of the family living near them.

#### 4.4 Limitations and Future Research

There are a few limitations to this study. Some participants may have understood the questions better and expressed their feelings and experiences better if the interviews were conducted in their native language, Arabic, instead of in English. Another potential

limitation to this study is that not all participants were residing in the United States at the time that the 9/11 terror attacks occurred. Perhaps more participants would have felt personally affected by the 9/11 terror attacks if they were in the United States, leading to interesting findings about how their lives in the United States had changed.

In the future, studies should include questions about each participant's advice to new immigrants because this could bring forth issues that participants had experienced before that others could avoid. Answers to questions about participants' feelings about the public image of Arab-Americans could help better shape researchers' understanding of CAAs perceived discrimination . Understanding more about the participants' path to obtaining citizenship such as why they chose to become citizens, how becoming a citizen made them feel, and what the citizenship ceremony day was like for them also would yield rich data about their acculturative experiences. Because some scholars state that fear of authority can be a limitation to a participant's responses, asking about institutional discrimination experiences, while obtaining citizenship or otherwise, would be informative data in the future. Kulczycki and Lobo (2002) stated that CAAs are more likely than Muslim Arab-Americans to practice intermarriage. Future studies should consider the role of religiosity in intermarriage among CAAs and their integration process.

The researcher believes that future research on the acculturation process of hyphenated Americans should not ignore the religious affiliation of the participants, as pointed out by Ajrouch and Jamal (2007). An interesting finding regarding CAAs and discrimination was that half of the participants responded that they had not experienced

discrimination in the United States. Previous research suggested that discrimination towards Arab-Americans had not declined over time. However, based on the finding that two participants felt that 9/11 had “probably changed the lives of Muslims”, the researcher feels that future studies should consider the religion of their participants when determining if discrimination towards Arab-Americans has increased, stayed the same, or decreased since 9/11.

APPENDIX A  
RECRUITMENT FLIER



**The University of Texas at Arlington is conducting a study focusing on the Christian Arab-American experience, including experiences with discrimination. The study will involve one-hour interviews with people who identify as Christian Arab-Americans.**

**In order to participate you must:**

- Identify as Christian & Middle Eastern
- Reside in the United States a minimum of 5 years
- Be between 35-55 years of age
- Have been born in the Arab World

**If you would like to participate, please contact Amanda Haddad at [redacted] or [redacted]**

APPENDIX B  
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

## I. Opening

A. (Establish Rapport) [shake hands] My name is Amanda Haddad and I am currently a masters student and the University of Texas at Arlington. I thought it would be a good idea to interview you as a part of my thesis and learn more about the Christian Arab-American community.

B. (Purpose) I would like to ask you some questions about your background, and some experiences you have had in order to understand more about Christian Arab-Americans.

C. (Motivation) I hope to use this information to help bring awareness to Christian Arab-Americans' in the future.

D. (Time Line) The interview should take no more than one hour. If it is ok with you, I will be audio recording our conversation. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time?

**(Transition: Let me begin by asking you some questions about where you live)**

## II Body

A. (Topic) General demographic information

1. Where are you originally from?

a. How long have you lived in the United States?

b. When did you move to the U.S.?

c. Did you move straight to Texas or did you live in another state

before Texas?

d. Have you been back to your native country since moving to the U.S.?

- If no, will you return to your native country? (Just to visit or to move back?)

**(Transition: I would like to learn more about your first experiences in the United States)**

B. (Topic) Experiences

1. Can you talk a little about when you came to the United States?
  - a. What was the main reason you came to the United States?
  - b. What was your first impression of the United States?
    - Has your impression changed?
      - Why or Why not?
  - c. Why did you decide to stay in the United States?
  - d. Tell me about the first time you felt connected to the U.S.
    - Can you give me examples about why you are connected to the U.S.?
2. What do you like about American culture that is not like your culture?
  - a. Do you include \_\_\_\_\_ in your life now?

**(Transition: Now that you have told me aspects that you like about American culture, I want to learn more about aspects that you like about your culture that are different from American culture.)**



3. What do you like about your culture that is not like American culture?

a. Do you include \_\_\_\_\_ in your life now?

**(Transition: We have been talking about your experiences coming to the United States. Now I would like you to think about your time in the United States.)**

C. (Topic) Discrimination

1. Has there ever been a time when you didn't feel welcome in the U.S.?

- What about that experience made you not feel welcome?

2. Is there anything about cultural practices, like the way people interact with one another, the customs, or social etiquette that are uncomfortable?

3.. Have you ever experienced discrimination in the United States?

- If yes- Tell me about the time you experienced discrimination?
  - Why do you think you had that experience?
  - How often have you experienced discrimination?
- If no- Do you know someone who experienced discrimination in the United States?

4. To what extent do you believe 9/11 changed your life in the United States?

- Can you explain to me exactly how it changed your life?

**(Transition: Now, I would like to learn more about you and your family.)**

#### D. (Topic) Family

1. Did you immigrate to the United States alone or with someone?

- If not alone, with who?

2. What is your current age and at what age were you when you immigrated to the United States?

3. Do you have family that lives near to you?

- How often do you see your relatives?

4. Other than your immediate family, tell me about the person you spend the most time with?

- Is this person a relative? Friend?
- Tell me more about this person.

#### E. Conclusion

1. Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you would like to share?

2. I would like to thank you for your time and allowing me to learn more about your experiences.

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