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Arab Americans The Dilemma of Ethnic Identity and Assimilation

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Abstract

In this era of technology and globalization, many ethnic groups are becoming known to the American public when before they were overshadowed by geographic limitations. Major world events of the 2000's have brought the Arab culture to the forefront of the media's attention and created an opening for greater understanding of a people who had previously been referred to as an invisible minority .Arab Americans come from completely different culture, language, and religion. This move makes them prone to experience one or more challenges: assimilation, integration, or marginalization.

This paper investigates the assimilation process of Arab Americans in the U.S and their struggle towards acculturation faced by both first and second generation Arab Americans. This theses uses standard social, cultural, and Arab Americans history methodology to examine the patterns of assimilation, immigration, ethnicity and religious background. The study showed a variety of potential existing barriers hindering Arab immigrants from successful integration into the United States society. Cultural and religious differences, distinctions in moral and ethical values, and discrimination are the major factors causing the overall struggles of the acculturation process. However, we demonstrate that, on average, the basic social values of Arab migrants fall roughly midway between those prevailing in their country of origin and their country of destination. We conclude that Arab migrants do not move to Western countries with rigidly fixed attitudes; instead, they gradually absorb much of the host culture, as assimilation theories suggest.

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General Introduction

While globalization has made this world smaller, interdependent, and heterogeneous, clashes among different cultures became inevitable. Immigrants leave their home country for many reasons, by choice or necessity. The U.S. is considered one of the countries that enjoys its cultural diversity. In the case of Arab- immigrants, they came to the U.S. with one goal in mind, the attainment of a better life. They come with a strong sense of achievement and motivation, hoping to accomplish economic prosperity in the "land of opportunity", the United States. However, as newcomers, they often find themselves in a veritable crossfire of social and psychological forces; this creates a dilemma for them as to whether they should assimilate into the host society and to what extent, or retain their cultural identity. The purpose of this work is to examine the assimilation process of Arab Americans in the USA in relation to two main variables: race, ethnic identity and assimilation.

To pursue this study, the following research questions are raised: how racial- and ethnic feelings of identity, and identity markers, affect the assimilation trajectory of Arab Americans in The USA? How do first and second generation Arab Americans find balance between the American culture they have grown up with and their ethnic heritage? The research hypothesises that the difficulty of some Arab immigrants to acculturate successfully sometimes is rooted in their beliefs and eagerness to maintain the same conditions of living within the country where the majority of such beliefs are not widely accepted and a variety of barriers are existing such as distinctions in moral and ethical values, and discrimination. As a result, Arab-Muslim immigrants tend to stay within their ethnic and national community, which makes the process of acculturation even more complicated but not impossible.

This work is devided into three chapters. The first chapter present a historical background of Arab Americans community their origin and settlement in America.

The second chapter focuses on Arab Americans race and ethnic identity because race and ethnicity are essential to the understanding of assimilation and they are both part of a person's visible and unchangeable baggage, and are part of a person's deepest sense of self. Since assimilation is dependant upon the society the immigrant is met by, and not just the immigrant himself, it seems obvious that how a person perceives your race or ethnicity will affect how they interact with you.

The third chapter discusses the assimilation process of Arab Americans and a comparative study of Arab Detroit to other Arab enclaves in America , or to Arab Americans who do not live in enclaves will be presented as well as a comparison of segmented assimilation trajectories between groups that would give a richer picture of Arab immigrants in America. It lays the evidence through the study that despite all the Cultural and religious differences and distinctions in moral and ethical values, Arab Americans first and second generations had succeeded to assimilate to the American main stream. The limitation surrounding the conduct of this study were basically related to the lack of sources available locally, hampering thereby the use of rich material.

Chapter one

Arab Americans

Introduction

Since the very beginning America has been a refuge for those who fled religious and political oppression or who sought for economic opportunities. This was the case not only for Europeans but also for any ambitious person who braved the high seas to seek his or her fortune on the American soil. In many aspects, motivations for Arabs to move to America were the same for most immigrants.

Arabs brought with them their culture, language, traditions and social institutions. Overtime they adapted themselves to their new country and became an integral part of the American society.

In this introductory chapter, a brief overview of the history of Arab Americans will be provided. Their origin, immigration and settlement in the United Sates.

Who are the Arab Americans?

Definitions of what constitutes "Arab American" can vary widely. The term Arab Americans used in this paper refers to any person who has any historical ancestry in the Arab World, referring to the twenty-first nations that form members to the Arab League, which includes Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

People tend to think that the term Arab goes back to the people coming from Arabic speaking countries of the Middle East, however, the term is very controversial. Generally, it refers to a person whose mother tongue is Arabic; but is the fact of speaking Arabic sufficient to classify you as Arab? Most of the time, the term Arab is related to the Islamic faith, yet not all Arabs are Muslims. Moreover this theory is not relevant because there are also some non Arab communities like the Kurds, the Chluh, The Circassians[1] Armenians and Berbers who do not speak Arabic. Despite all these conditions the majority of Arab Americans consider themselves Arabs because they are descendents of people from the Middle East and North African countries.

The Arabic language is the language of the holy book of Islam which is the Quran. The whole majority of indigenous people of these regions embraced Islam, and adopted the Arabic language which created strong ties between them. Today 1,400 years later the Islamic holy book remains in its original Arabic text, thus this language is used and celebrated by millions of Muslims all over the world.

[1]-The Circassians are an indigenous people of the Northwest Caucasus region.

What makes the Arab Americans feel Arabs is their cultural and historical heritage, and the collective experience they have had on the American soil. But one must not forget the huge variance within the Arab community, and the necessity for the Arab people to be distinguished as such.

The Socio-Religious Profile

Language

A Central Semitic language, Arabic is the language officially spoken in all of the Arab countries. Yet vast dialectical differences exist between each region in that the Arabic spoken in Tunisia may not be understood by someone from Qatar or vice versa. As such, a modern standardized version of Arabic exists, referred to as Al-Fusha, which maintains the same grammatical rules across all Arab countries so that communication can be maintained. Similarly, written form of Al-Fusha maintains universal grammatical rules, utilizing the same 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet regardless of location. Much like English in any English speaking country, Al-Fusha is the form of Arabic taught across all countries in the Middle East while the dialectic versions of each region are viewed as slang.

Yet with the continuity of the Arabic language across the Arab countries, only about 50% of Arab Americans can speak Arabic . And even fewer number of Arabic speakers are fluent in the language, as many are unable to read or write in Arabic, whose symbols are vastly different from the English alphabet. As such, although retention of an individual's ancestral language may occur, that person can still be considered an Arab American without speaking Arabic.

Religion

Contrary to popular belief, Arab Americans belong to a variety of religious backgrounds. A recent study from the Arab American Institute found that about 63% of Arab Americans practice some form of Christian faith, of which 35% are Catholic, 18% are Orthodox , and 10% are Protestant . Around 25% of Arab Americans are Muslims, while 8% practice Judaism, and 4% claimed an "Other" or "No Affiliation".

Culture

The Arab American culture may be seen as patriarchal, yet higher emphasis is placed on seniority and respect for elders within the hierarchy. A highly collectivistic culture, emphasis is placed on maintaining and contributing to the family identity even when one may live independently of his/her family.

In many Arab American families, a person lives with his/her parents until marriage, regardless of gender. Parents play an active role in their children's lives even after their child has married and moved into their own home. It is also an expected norm that the children will eventually take care of their parents either physically or financially when the parents reach old age.

Preservation of family honor is given great importance amongst Arab Americans. As such, generosity, hospitality, and engaging in good works within the community are highly encouraged. Similarly, hard work and advanced education in both genders are viewed as ways to increase the family honor. In contrast, engaging in any form of illegal or immoral behavior is highly frowned upon and may result in a person being shunned from their family and community.

Arab Immigration to the United States

During the period of great immigration to the United States between roughly 1880 and 1945, a large and diverse number of groups arrived who are now by many considered to be a backbone of American society. As with any other population, Arabs showed three main waves of immigration to the United States within the past 130 years.

Early Arab Immigrants from 1880 to 1915

The first Arabs to set foot on the American soil were village farmers or artisans who set out in order to gain wealth, in search of adventure, to improve them selves economically or simply to avoid military service. Fewer Muslims came at that time and many immigrated in North and South America and the majority settled in New England. For financial reasons and due to poverty of under developed countries like the Middle East, they immigrated in small numbers looking for better jobs and better opportunities, thus improving their living standards exactly as other groups of immigrants that settled in America at that time. Moreover, Arabs actively participated to the development of the American society in various fields, and they where recruited in America because of the mounting labour shortage[2]

The Arab immigration to the new world has started nearly two centuries ago around 1800. It traces its origins to several Arab countries. They arrived to the United States in two significant and different migration waves, each with its proper characteristics that have been useful in the formation of political movements of Arab Americans. No economic or political events have actually triggered the immigration of Arabs in the United States, and few have reached the American soil before the 1880s.[3]

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[2] Haik, Joseph (1974–1975). *The American Arabic speaking community almanac*. Los Angeles, Calif.: News Circle

[3]Alixa Naff, (1993). *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*. Southern Illinois University. Press, 1993,P.87.

The first wave to set foot on the new world came during the era called the great migration when more than 20 million of immigrants came to the United States from all over the world. Between the late 1800 and World War I, lots of Arabs moved to America mainly from Great Syria which includes present-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. At that period a few number of Arabs came from Yemen, Iraq, Morocco, and Egypt and many other regions from the Ottoman Empire.

These provinces were divided into several independent countries as Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine and Iraq. The majority of Arabs who came at that time was Christian, and belonged to a lower middle class. They fled their homelands devastated by civil wars and persecutions, looking for new opportunities. These immigrants left their original countries which were under feudal system[4] until a civil war broke up in 1860 between Christians Syrians and Muslim Palestinians[5.] Consequently, people rapidly lost their lands and started to look for a refuge because of the Ottoman oppression which did not grant the same rights to Christians and Muslims who had fewer restrictions. In addition the inauguration of the Suez Canal which regulated the traffic between the Mediterranean countries and the Far East made the transport of merchandise so easier and faster that Japanese silk dethroned Lebanon silk.

As a result most Arabs made living through pack peddling of dry goods, however many, subsequently, became manufacturers, storekeepers, and importers. Arabs continued working under this rhythm until the immigration laws restricted the entry of a number of nationalities from the Middle East, including Arabs. After the civil war, immigration took up again to stream to the United States.

[4] Feudalism is a decentralized socio-political structure in which a weak monarchy attempts to control the lands ofthe realm through reciprocal agreements with regional leaders.
[5] The Druze and their Christian Maronite neighbours, who had thus far lived as religious communities on friendly terms, entered a period of social disturbance in the year 1840, which culminated in the civil war of 1860. The civil war of 1860 cost the Christians some ten thousand lives in lots of towns of Lebanon.

Nearly 12 million immigrants came to America between 1870 and 1900 including approximately 60 000 Arabs, of whom 68 per cent were single males and more than a half were illiterate. For these people the United States represented the American dream; an opportunity to seize in order to have a better life. It is important to state that extensive federal legislations on immigration were not deeply promulgated at that time, mainly because immigration was needed and required for its labour force to achieve a developed nation.

The Second Wave of Arab Immigrants from 1930s to 1970s

Arab immigration to the United States was impeded by the establishment of a number of laws that restricted the flow of migration, such as The Immigration Act of 1924 also known as "Johnson-Reed Act" including the National Origins Act, and the Asian Exclusion Act. The act was a United States federal law that limited the number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to 2% of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States.

The purpose of the law was to restrict further immigration from the Southern and Eastern Europeans who were coming to the United States in large numbers during the 1890s, and was also aiming at prohibiting the immigration of Asians after the end of the Second World War, and despite the huge effort of the American government to restrict the flow of immigrants through immigration quota act, Arab immigration started again around 1940 to the 1960s.

Compared to the first wave, which was composed mainly of 90% of Christians and only 5% of Muslims, the new Arab immigrants' nationalities, origins and faith were diverse. Indeed the second wave included 60% of Muslims coming from Palestine, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. Arabs tended to transcend their religious differences as their membership coOrthodox, Melkite, Protestant and Catholic. Moreover, unlike the first wave, the second influx tended to stay in the United States in search of better living conditions, to

escape oppression, military service and wars. Furthermore, the Arab Israeli conflict has always provoked the departure of great waves of population. Clashes from 1948 to 1967 where Arabs were defeated pushed many Palestinians to flee from their motherlands.

In addition, new immigrants were well off compared to the first immigrants. Indeed the majority of them were middle class professionals who were highly educated and highly skilled including; professors, teachers, doctors and engineers. Moreover among the second wave there was a considerable number of students, who were attracted by the American universities that favoured Brain Drain[6]. The majority of these immigrants considered themselves as being sojourners and their motivation was to return home when life in their countries became safer. However, these students chose to stay in the United States even after the end of their scholarship.

The Last Wave of Arab Immigrants from 1965 to Nowadays

With the changes in laws, Arab immigration entered a new chapter in its history. Approximately 75 % of foreign born Arab Americans immigrated after 1975 and 1980. This last rush is the result of the Immigration Act12 of 1965[7] which abolished the original quota system which had been in place in 1924 and its bias against non European immigration[8].

It comprised professionals and entrepreneurs who escaped their homelands which were devastated by wars, political and economic instability. The last wave which was more diverse in terms of religion tended to make a huge effort in order to keep its identity, culture and

[6] Brain drain refers particularly to the emigration of scientists and highly qualified people to the United States in the early 1960s for more favourable geographic, economic, or professional environments.

[7] There were a series of laws passed in 1965, during the Civil Rights Movement. These laws have abolished quotas based on nationality, in force since, The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924.

[8] Alixa,Naff, Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience (Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), p.87.

traditions. These new comers, Christians or Muslims strongly defended Arab nationalism and kept a close contact with their motherland.

The term Arab Americans refers to people coming to the United States from the Middle East and the Maghreb. Most Arab Americans of the first influx came from Great Syria, mainly from what is called today Lebanon and where the majority of the population is Christian. It was the late wave that included the most diverse minority of Arabs, especially from Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon, Egypt and Palestine and it included a huge number of Muslims.

In 2000 there were 1.2 million persons of Arab ancestry in the United States compared with 610.000 in 1980 and 860.000 in 1900. Arabs represented 0,42 percent of the U.S. population in 2000, compared with 0,27 in 1980. More than 37 percent among those reported to be Arabs were Lebanese, the second largest group were Syrians, other nationalities; Egyptians, Palestinians, Jordanians, Moroccans, and Iraqis were also palpable. Moreover nearly 4, 3 per cent of Arab population was identified as Kurdish, Algerian, Yemenite, Saudi Arabian, Tunisian, Berber, Libyan, and Kuwaiti[9].

Arab Settlement in the United States

For the majority of immigrants, New York represented the United States. It was for them their host land, this is why, it contained the largest and the most diverse Arab community in the late nineteenth century to such a point that an area in Manhattan was known among Arab community as "little Syria". Arabs owned businesses and residences where they were publishers, manufacturers and importers of lace, embroidery and lingerie. Commerce that ran

[9] www.census. Gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf

little Syria was peddling so between 1880 and 1910 the majority of the new immigrants were peddlers.

The First Wave

The majority of Arab Christians coming during the first wave escaped from religious persecution. They established in America, a land of democracy, and above all, a land of freedom of religion They came from countries where religious and state matters go hand in hand. Discrimination was current especially with the decrease of the Ottoman Empire. As much as the Ottoman rulers control declined, the local rulers' authority increased which was used to oppress local people, mainly non Muslims. This hatred against non-Muslims, especially Christians was one of the consequences of Arab departure and the clashes between Christians in Europe and Ottoman rulers. Moreover as the number of immigrants grew up there was also an increasing need of institutions to get Arab immigrants together, such as mosques for Muslims, and churches for Christians.

Lots of Christian Arabs also built churches like the Syrian Orthodox Church established in 1885 in the Eastern part of the United States. By and large few mosques have been created before 1960s, in fact the first mosque was built on the American soil in 1915. According to the Faith Communities Today (FACT) survey, 87 per cent of mosques in the United States were founded within the last three decades.

The Second Wave

While the first wave came to obtain material wealth, the second wave came for more ambitious and intellectual opportunities. Arab immigrants of the second influx were obviously better educated, packed with idea about democracy, eager for education and a better life. From 1965 until 1992, more than 400.000 Arab immigrants arrived to the United States.

After the Second World War, lots of Arab immigrants who were well established helped their families to join them. A great number among these latter came to improve their education. They came thanks to student visas which would limit their stay on the American soil, obliging them to return home one their education completed. Nevertheless many of them chose to remain there and married American citizens or just because they had the opportunity to obtain a work permit by an employer who would sponsor their right to stay.

The Last Wave

The third influx of immigrants was the largest one due to the relaxation of the immigration laws and quota system. The Pan- Arab movement[10] which arose during the 1950s gave many Arabs pride great and hope about their future. Nevertheless, in 1967 the defeat of the Arab people in the Six Day War[11] brought them disillusionment. Indeed it was the most tragic and affecting date in the history of Arabs who saw then their hopes and their unity shattered the fact that made immigration towards the United States and other non Arab-countries an inevitable alternative.

In addition to the Six Day War, there were clashes within Arab countries that brought about insecurity. The civil war that took place in Lebanon from 1975 to 1992 made 90.000 people move from Lebanon in addition to other thousands of Palestinians, Syrians, Jordanians and Egyptians. The Gulf War in 1991 added many waves of immigrants who move to the United States, escaping Saddam Hussein's dictatorship and caprices.

[10] A form of cultural nationalism, Pan-Arabism is a movement for unification among the peoples of the Arab World. It is closely connected to Arab nationalism which asserts that the Arabs constitute a single nation. The idea was at its height during the 1960s, and the movement has strongly opposed colonialism and Western political involvement in the Arab world

[11] Six-Day War, also called June War or Third Arab-Israeli War, brief war that took place June 5–10, 1967 253-11

In many Arab countries, the educational system became upgraded after independence and thus the number of graduates increased. Yet, it was still not adapted to their skills and ambitions, so many left their countries triggering of "Brain Drain" phenomenon. The American educational system answered the needs of Arab immigrants as for their career advancement, placing at their disposal the best engineering training, latest technology and medical advance. During the 1970s the rise of multiculturalism in America created an atmosphere of tolerance and equality among all immigrant groups, giving them the right to express themselves freely and practice their customs, language and faiths freely.

Nowadays the distribution of the Arab population in America is as follow: 26 per cent are settled in the South, 24 per cent in the Midwest, and finally 22 per cent in the west. 2000 U.S. Census demonstrated that 48 per cent of the Arabic population is concentrated mainly in five states, namely California, Florida, Michigan, New Jersey and New York. Over one decade, Arab population has increased in most states specifically in New York City which gathers the largest Arab community.

Causes of Immigration

In the late nineteenth century America was in the eyes of the whole world a remote and mysterious reality. Nevertheless it was not enough to inhibit Arab eagerness to cross the ocean in order to get to America and have access to the American dream. As James Truslow Adams[12] shrewdly defined it:

> The American Dream is "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement… It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.

Thus many did not resist answering the call of trade and adventure. Commercial bond first pushed the Arabs to move to the United States. It is said that the first Arabs to set foot on the American soil accompanied the Spanish explorers in the fifteenth century and actively traded with the first colonist. Economic and political alliances were formed in 1700s between North African countries and the American settlers. Algerian merchants supplied the cavalry of George Washington by exporting horses. Morocco was officially the first country which opened its ports to the United States and recognizing its independence. In a letter sent by George Washington, this later expressed his gratitude via a treaty of friendship between Sultan Mohamed III of Morocco and the United States in 1787. Since that moment, North

[12] James Truslow Adames(1878-1949) was an American writer and historian. It is believed that he coined the term "The American Dream" in his 1931 book *The Epic of America.*

African and Middle Eastern trade have had a significant impact on the Arabo-American relationships. Document.

Unlike many immigrants who were attracted by work opportunities or escaping from religious persecution, or were in search of asylum, the majority of these Arab artisans came to the United States engaged in an enterprise of peddling. Previously informed by their relatives who were already comfortably settled, Arabs had a primary idea about where to go to find job and housing. They were not pulled from their mother country, because the bonds that link them to their friends and relatives were too rigid. However, the wish to improve their family status, in addition to the remoteness and mystery that shaped legendary America, gained the upper hand.

The most significant reason of the Arabic rush was the Israeli Palestinian clash, especially after the instauration of the British Mandatory of Palestine. This later was a legal document for the administration of Palestine, formally approved by the League of Nations in June 1922. In this document the British collaborated with the Jewish community, and promoted the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Moreover they sustained a huge number of Jewish immigrants to settle in Palestine which led to the ostracism of Palestinians. Therefore, Arabs were purchased from their own land and their products were boycotted by the local Zionist movement.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Arabic speaking countries resonated with great hopes about Arab unity, especially concerning the question of Palestine. However the defeat of the Arab league in the Six Day War shattered all their optimism about the future. Even though it had been traumatic to Arabs, this war engendered an unprecedented common sense of unity. Indeed before that event Arabs were not united because of diversity of the religious faiths, dialects, cultures and nationalities. In the post Arab Israeli war and the spreading of the anti Arab

sentiment, Arabs started to form cohesive groups, creating associations and organizations to fight prejudice and discrimination perpetrated towards Palestinians.

The question remains then why most Muslims did not join the mass migration to the new world, since all the aforementioned conditions applied as well, or sometimes more, for the Muslim subjects in the region. Some scholars point out that because these economic criteria applied even more for Muslims, they were unable to obtain the funds necessary to pay for the passage to America[13] Others point out that Muslims feared religious and cultural obstacles in that they would be unable to maintain their Islamic traditions in a Christian society. It is likely that these factors both contributed to the fact that Muslim Arabs migrated to America in far lesser numbers than their Christian counterparts.

[13] Khalaf, *The Background and Causes, P.21*

Conclusion

Arab American are a diverse community of immigrant and the descendents of immigrants, who have come from throughout the Arab words. They are Syrians, Lebanese, Egyptians, Palestinians, Jordanians, and Yemenis. From North Africa to Southwest Asia, they are Christians and Mouslims.

Since the first wave of immigrants arrived to America more than century ago, Arab Americans have assimilated into mainstream U.S. life. They share economic and social diversity as all Americans, but they also share treasures brought with them from their native lands, a rich heritage and culture. The next chapter will examine how this culture and heritage that Arabs brought with them can affect their lives in the host society.

Chapter two

Race and Ethnic Identity in United States

Introduction

Definitions of ethnic identity vary according to the underlying theory embraced by researchers and scholars intent on resolving its conceptual meanings. Typically, ethnic identity is an affiliative construct, where an individual is viewed by himself and by others as belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group. An individual can choose to associate with a group especially if other choices are available (i.e., the person is of mixed ethnic or racial heritage) . Affiliation can be influenced by racial, natal, and cultural factors.

At an individual or societal level one may rely on labels to describe their ethnic affiliation and subsequently their identity. Labels assist in classifying and naming people. Thus, ethnic labeling has a sociopolitical value and function, especially for census and demographic studies. Arab Americans, for example, are divided about whether they consider themselves to be white or not, and about what – if any – ethnic label is to be used to characterize them. Even though the term "Arab American" is contested, it is used because the term is embraced by major institutions and supportive organizations such as the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS), the Arab American National Museum and the Arab American Institute.

This chapter discusses and analyzes Arab-American race and ethnicity. Among the topics discussed are the diversity within this group, the history and historiography of Arab America, how foreign policy and geo-political events shape this particular identity, and how Arab Americans have gone from being an invisible to a hyper-visible group in multicultural America.

Being Arab American

The American ethnic groupings may present foreign concepts to a newcomer. They may seem constructed, impersonal or even oppressive to those that are categorized in this manner. In the case of Arab Americans, this is especially true. The pan-ethnic label "Arab American" is contested by some of those it is meant to describe, as is even the label "Arab." Many people of Arab heritage prefer national or religious markers instead. Many prefer no label at all.

The term was coined by the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG) as part of their larger goal to educate the public on affairs in the Middle East14. Just like the term "Hispanic," "Arab American" is meant to cover people from a variety of backgrounds, and may therefore never be appropriate for all its intended subjects. "Arab American" covers a broad spectrum of people from both Asia and Africa, of both Christian and Muslim cultures, and a large variety of denominations within those religions. In addition, Arab Americans belong to different socioeconomic groups, are first- and second-generation (or even older) immigrants, have come as refugees, sojourners and immigrants, and have a variety of different physical characteristics.

It is a matter of debate within the community, concerning what name to use for the group. Randa A. Kayyali[14] says that:

> the 2000 census indicated that 85 percent of Arab Americans still identify first by country of origin, although this does not mean that Arab is not a secondary or tertiary identifier, or even the first choice in another setting..... in recent years, an increasingly Islamic consciousness rivals for primary identification.

[14] Haddad in *Immigration and Religion in America*, 261.

And that religious identifiers are also common among some Christians, for instance, Chaldeans. Some religious minorities from Arab majority countries do not consider themselves Arab at all.

What is Ethnic Identity?

A complex and multidimensional concept, ethnic identity has no set definition. In its simplest form, ethnic identity can be seen as a person's level of identification with their hereditary culture rather than the culture of their place of residence. Components of ethnic identity include eating traditional meals, observance of traditional practices, language fluency, affiliation with ethnic organizations, and attitude towards the ethnic group. The more a person immerses his/herself within the components of their ethnic culture the greater their ethnic identity becomes[15] .

Theories on Ethnic Identity

According to Erik Erikson's (1964) theory of identity formation and James Marcia's (1980) model of identity formation, Phinney (1993) posits that there are three stages of ethnic identity: unexamined ethnic identity, moratorium, and achieved ethnic identity. A key factor impacting a person's stage of ethnic identity is one's commitment to the customs and beliefs of that specific ethnic group. Ethnic identity commitment can occur with or without examination of the deeper meaning behind belonging to that ethnic group.

In the unexamined ethnic identity stage, a person experiences a state of diffusion or a state of foreclosure. In the diffusion state, one does not care about their ethnicity and instead adapts the ethnic practices of the majority around them. In the state of foreclosure, a person embraces their ethnicity by merely adopting the practices of their family members as indicative of their

[15] Kayyali, 62.

ethnic group without having any other form of background exploration (Phinney, 1993; 2004).

in the moratorium stage, one encounters an identity crisis that inspires them to begin exploring the facets of their ethnic background. From this exploration, a person forms the beginnings of their ethnic identity (Phinney, 1993; 2004). Intuitively, a person reaches the achieved ethnic identity stage when they have reached a firm sense of their ethnic identity.

At this point one is able to embrace a bicultural perspective, combining knowledge of his/her own ethnic identity with the majority ethnicity of those around them.

Studies on ethnicity are considerable in number and diverse across disciplines; what we understand ethnicity to be has been modified significantly over the years and while we study ethnicity through various disciplines and historical moments, it is critical to remember that the meaning of ethnicity is multifaceted, personal and affected by the current social and political circumstances. The work of Max Weber provides a suitable point to the study of ethnicity from a historical perspective. Ethnic identity, according to Weber, was based on: A subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or of both, or because of memories of colonization and migration (Weber, 1978: 389).

The idea of descent was important although blood ties were not; but moreover, it was the belief in a shared history that Weber argued would withstand time as the unifying agent Weber also acknowledges the role of migration on ethnicity as the force that intensifies sentiments of group identity in a new country and simultaneously, spurs a longing for the old country. He states that:

> The persistent effect of the old ways and of childhood reminiscences continues as a source of native country sentiment among emigrants even when they have become so thoroughly adjusted to the new country that return to their homeland would be intolerable ... .(Weber)

Migration not only builds an ethnic identity, it also instigates a longing for a common, left behind past.

How Foreign Policy and Geo-Political Events Shape this Identity?

Arab- American Ethnic History and Historiography

A label can be a source of power, but also a way of "othering" a person. The creation of the "Arab-American" label was a result of a variety of historical and ideological projects. Most Arab-American scholars point to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War as a deciding factor. As Americans joined in their support of Israel, the "Arab enemy" was in focus. In response to this dislike, Arab pan nationalism grew, both in the U.S. and in the Arab world. The happenings in the Middle East coincided with the American multicultural revolution of the 1960s.

As many other ethnic groups were joining forces, and fighting for recognition, pride, and respect, Arab America followed suit by organizing interest groups. Starting with the formation of the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG), many more organizations began to use the labels "Arab American," or "American Arab," showing group solidarity and a collective identity. Before this time, individuals and their organizations tended to use religious or nationality labels. An example would be the Syrian American Association. Between the 1960s and 1980s, important pan ethnic organizations like the National Association of Arab-Americans (NAAA), the American Arab Anti-Discrimination

Committee (ADC), the Arab American Institute (AAI), and The Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) emerged[16].

In addition to becoming part of the American multicultural project of the 1960s and 70s, the pan-ethnic mobilization among Arab Americans was also a protective action. A variety of international conflicts and terrorist actions in the Middle East, some involving the United States, highlighted the Arab world as the American enemy. Starting with the Arab-Israeli War, followed by the 1979 hostage crisis in Teheran, the 1983 car bombings in Beirut, the 1985 TWA hijacking in Beirut and Algiers, 1991 Gulf War, the 1993 World Trade Center terrorist bombing, and culminating in the 2001 terrorist attacks, Arabs have been cast as America's enemy.

Although it is true that some radical Islamic Arab groups have committed atrocious acts, Arabs in America have had to take an inordinate amount of the blame. Arab Americans have faced discrimination, stereotyping, hate crime and a variety of discriminatory governmental programs. Nadine Naber says:

Anti-Arab racism after World War II emerged in an interplay of U.S. military, political, and economic expansion in the Middle East, anti-Arab media representations, and the institutionalization of government policies that specifically target Arabs and Arab Americans in the United States.[17]

In the face of such negative attention, it is not uncommon to see the formation of a "reactive ethnicity," Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shryock, writing about the formation of an Arab-American identity, say that

[16] *Kayyali, 62; Rignall in Arab Detroit, 54; Read in Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11, 308;*
[17] Naber in *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11*, 31

Because Arabs are viewed negatively by most Americans, attempts to combat this negative image, with or without reference to the geopolitical conflicts that shape it, have become a powerful agenda around which to organize an ethnic community.[18]

While the formation of ethnicity could be seen as a reaction to outside events, the institutional and organizational flowering of Arab America also served to locate and highlight a community that seemed lost in the mainstream through assimilation. Most scholarship about the early waves of Arab Americans points to a largely assimilated population. Aswad says:

Until the mid-1960s most Arabs as well as other ethnic groups in America strove to assimilate American ways,[19] for instance by using American names and American clothing. Other scholars have commonly written about invisibility. Louise Cainkar writes: Unlike other ascribed and self-described 'people of color' in the United States, Arabs are often hidden under the Caucasian label, if not forgotten all together.[20]

Following 9/11, this new visibility turned into hyper-visibility, when Arab America suddenly was the center of a lot of negative attention, both by government, the public and the media. The government enacted laws allowing surveillance, profiling, detainment and the deportation of Arab Americans. The public was scared, and Arab Americans (along with other individuals perceived to be Muslim or Arab) became the target of violence, hate mail and discrimination. The media played into the public fears by reporting on supposed terrorist connections.

[18] - Abraham and Shryock in *Arab Detroit,* 40.
[19] - Aswad, "*The Lebanese Muslim Community*," 178.
[20] Cainkar, "*No Longer Invisible*," 22.

Arab-American Racial History and Historiography

Although racial markers are socially, and not scientifically, constructed, many ethnic groups have a history of struggle connected to their move from one racial designation to another. Arab Americans began their story in America as "white by default." This was followed by years of court battles to keep their white designation. At the dawn of the new millennium, many Arab Americans wish to be recognized as something other than white.

In the beginning of Arab immigration history, the immigrants from the Arab world were so few, and lived so dispersed, that they avoided negative attention and enjoyed the privileges of "whiteness." This changed when the 1910 census began to count Syrians and Palestinians as "Asiatics," and thereby excluded them from citizenship and other "white" privileges.

From this time and until the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, Arab Americans (like many other "borderline whites") used the court system to fight for status as "white" in America. The courts have at various times allowed for or denied white status, often depending on the ideology of the time. Decisions have been based on what was considered to be scientific evidence, on physical appearance, on religion, on perceived assimilability and democratic mind, on differing definitions of "Caucasian" and on so-called "common knowledge."

By 1924, Syrians were officially categorized as white, but the battle for Arab "whiteness" resurfaced in court in 1942. This time it was a Muslim Yemeni who lost the right to naturalize based on his skin being "undisputedly dark brown in color," among other factors. However, following this decision the "immigration authorities issued a statement that a person of 'the Arabian race' was eligible for" naturalization" in 1944. The 1952 Immigration and Naturalization Act "affected a policy of color-blind naturalization and negated any further need for racial prerequisite cases. Arabs continued to be counted as white.

Politically and in other ways, Arab Americans are commonly identified as a 'minority' but that is not a legal designation." In an article for the U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency, Detroit's Arab-American and Chaldean population pleads their case:

> The Arab American and Chaldean communities have been productive contributors to our society. Yet still they have the same barriers [language and culture] common place to other minority groups that have been granted such status. (…) It is important to identify the barriers this community is facing and to implement remedies that will ensure continued progress in business development[21].

This dilemma is not unique to Arab Americans, many white "ethnics" have faced a similar challenge: gaining access to affirmative action programs on the basis of discrimination faced by society. However, the exclusion from affirmative action programs is not the sole reason Arab Americans are fighting for a new racial designation. There are practical reasons for it too. Since the U.S. Census (and other government statistics and research) bases itself on Directive 15's racial categories, Arab Americans are not distinct in these statistics. In the census, Arab Americans have been classified in a variety of ways. They have been wrongfully labeled as "Turks" or "Ottoman," and at times they have simply been called "Asian." This has led to a problem of counting the Arab-American population. The census itself expands on that, explaining how the race data is used:

Race is key to implementing many federal laws and is needed to monitor compliance with the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act. State governments use the data to determine congressional, state and local voting districts. Race data are also used to assess fairness of

[21] Minority Business Development Agency <www.mbda.gov/Bankole Thompson> (20 March 2010).

employment practices, to monitor racial disparities in characteristics such as health and education and to plan and obtain funds for public services.[22]

The final aspect of Arab-American racial identity that will be explored here, after having looked at official designations and problems of counting, is questions of personal identity and belonging. The reality felt by many Arab Americans is that though they are officially classified as white, the white majority does not see them as white, nor are they treated the same as the white majority. One way to see Arab-American exclusion from "whiteness" is in the public's reaction to terrorist actions. while after 9/11, Arab and Muslim Americans were singled out for "collective responsibility" with broad public support of special treatment of this group.

A new immigrant to the United States is met with a racial system they may not be familiar with. Although the idea of a racial categorization of people is not unique to the United States, there does seem to be something unique in its history and in how it is played out in America today. The outcome of the meeting between immigrant and racial dynamics, then, will be part of their assimilation process. The fact is that in order to assimilate to an American mainstream, one needs to be able to place oneself in the American racial hierarchy. Arab Americans, then, could simply choose to "remain" white, which is frequently the choice made on official forms and questionnaires. However, their experiences are leading them to feel less comfortable in the white category. Since there is not an adequate racial category to choose (and "other" is not always an option on forms), they are left in a "racial void." Shryock and Lin claim that there are: real consequences, socially and politically, for citizens who cannot be located, or cannot locate themselves, on the existing ethno racial grid.[23]

[22] Census 2010, "Explore the Form," <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/how/interactive-form.php> (18 March 2010).

[23] Shryock and Lin in *Citizenship and Crisis*, 52.

This, then, seems to apply to most Arab Americans, for even if a person chooses to identify as white, there is no automatic acceptance of that person's whiteness by the mainstream.

Conclusion

Though a pan-ethnic label was created, it has not had the same course through American history as many other pan-ethnic labels have. By being a relatively small and well-assimilated group, Arab Americans may well have remained in the shadows of ethnic America, were it is not for major geo-political events, as mentioned above. These events brought Arab America into the spotlight, and many Arab Americans and Arab-American scholars claim that these events (and American foreign policy connected to them) are the main reason Arab Americans are discriminated against. Some scholars say that anti-Arab images and discriminatory government programs are purposely meant to "intimidate, harass, and discourage Arab American resistance to U.S. policies in the Arab world. The following chapter will discuss this American foreign policy in relation to Arab American assimilation trajectory.

Chapter Three

Arab Assimilation to the United States of America

Introduction

The working definition of assimilation in this thesis is that it occurs when the immigrant goes from being an "other" to being "American." By using this definition, the pit falls and negative connotations of cultural abandonment are avoided. Instead the focus is on the immigrant's ability to be an American, which is, again, dependent upon both the immigrant and the host society. The ability to become "American" depends on the host society's degree of acceptance, which will differ from place to place. The degree of cultural and behavioral adjustment needed is, therefore, relative to the environment the immigrant is in.

This chapter will show first, how Segmented Assimilation Theory adequately explains the experiences of Arabs in the United States and there will be a focus on three counties surveyed in the Detroit Arab American Study: Wayne, Oakland and Macomb County and Michigan in the Detroit Metro area. Then how segmented assimilation is related to race and ethnicity and finally how religion can be an important element on the Arab American assimilation trajectory.

Assimilation Theory

The terms assimilation, integration, acculturation and incorporation are often used interchangeably, and need closer defining. "Assimilation" may to modern ears sound out dated, and in some ways, perhaps it is. Defining it as something close to "Americanization" has overtones of force, and of complete abandonment of one's ethnicity. During the Nativist of the 1920s, there was a strong degree of force involved in immigrant incorporation, leaving little room for immigrant families retention of ethnic behavior. The term assimilation is, however, so ingrained in both public and academic debate that it may still be used in a meaningful way.

The *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* describes assimilation as "the processes that lead to greater homogeneity in society."[24] We can differ it from "acculturation" since acculturation refers to simply obtaining cultural patterns and behavior. The Subcommittee on Acculturation defines it as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original patterns of either or both groups."[25]

Assimilation goes further into the immigrant's life, meaning that he/she obtains not only culture, but also incorporates mainstream structure into his life, for example by joining non-ethnic organizations.

Milton Gordon differentiates between primary and secondary relationships, saying that primary relationships are "personal, intimate, emotionally affective, and bring into play the whole personality." In contrast secondary relationships are "impersonal, formal, and

[24] Harold J. Abramson, "Assimilation and Pluralism," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980):150.
[25]As quoted in Milton M. Gordon *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964): 61.

segmentalized, and tend not to come very close to the core of the personality."[26] It is first when you incorporate the mainstream into your primary relationships that you have structurally assimilated.[27]

Herbert Gans points out that "ethnics can acculturate on their own, but they cannot assimilate unless they are given permission to enter the 'American' group or institution" leading to the "inevitable lag of assimilation behind acculturation."[28] The term "integration" is largely absent from American immigration scholarship, and seems to be used more in Europe. Whether this is a reflection of actual value-and ideological difference, or if it is just a matter of tradition is uncertain. The term implies meeting half way. In this regard it can be seen as more accurate of what actually happens when the immigrant is adjusting to the host society. There is a blending, and there is a need for action by the host society as well as by the immigrant.

Milton Gordon is a major name in the field of assimilation studies with his landmark Assimilation in American Life[29] from 1964. In this book, Gordon wishes to focus on "the nature of group life itself". He uses the term "Ethclass" to describe the intersection of ethnicity and social class, claiming that social participation in primary relations happen within the ethclass. Gordon created a seven stage model of assimilation used to describe what was before seen as a more uncomplicated and linear process. The seven stages are: Cultural or Behavioral assimilation, Structural assimilation, Marital assimilation, Identificational assimilation, Attitude receptional assimilation, Behavior receptional assimilation and Civic assimilation. Gordon claims that "Not only is the assimilation process mainly a matter of

[26]- Ibid. , 32.
[27] Ibid, 70.
[28] -Herbert J. Gans, "Toward a Reconciliation of 'Assimilation' and 'Pluralism': The Interplay of Acculturation and Ethnic Retention," *International Migration Review,* 31, no. 4, (1997): 878.
[29] Milton M. Gordon *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

degree, but, obviously, each of the stages or subprocesses distinguished above may take place in varying degrees."[30]

Arab in the 1960s and 70s the idea of a multicultural society gains popularity, both as ideology and as social policy.28 In this perspective the immigrant has more agency than in the Structuralist view where the immigrant is mainly a victim. There is still recognition of the problems involved in immigrant incorporation, but the desire is not to assimilate, but rather to achieve equality and equal rights.29 Part of the new debate is whether or not there is a "middle America", unified core or homogenous mainstream for the immigrant to become part of. There is a desire to place the excluded in the center, and to see ethnic traits as positive and in constant interaction with the rest of society. Glazer and Moynihan say that when they wrote their book (early 1960s), most of the major works about ethnic history and sociology were old. They missed scholarship that paid attention to the persistence of ethnicity, and so set out to do it themselves.[31]

There is much current debate as to whether or not we can use the past experiences of immigrant assimilation as a model for what will happen to today's immigrants. Many scholars argue that the circumstances are so different now, that what happened in the past is less relevant. They speak of differences in sending countries, differences in government policy and programs, differences in the American economy and work force, differences in the outlook of Americans on how they feel about foreigners and other major changes in society.[32]

Other scholars argue that there are lessons to be learned from the past, that there are enough similarities to make comparisons. Richard Alba and Victor Nee say that the goal of their influential 2003 book, *Remaking the American Mainstream*: Assimilation and

[30] Ibid., 71
[31] Glazer and Moynihan, lxxvi-lxxvii.
[32] Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and its Variants," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences,* 530 (1993):74-96

Contemporary Immigration, is to demonstrate that assimilation – as experienced by earlier immigrants - has continued relevance.[33] Alba and Nee are optimistic about the future of the second generation.

Segmented Assimilation Theory

There has been considerable scholarly interest in understanding the adaptation and assimilation processes of the new immigrants and their children (Alba and Nee 1997, 2003; Bankston and Zhou 1997; Farley and Alba 2002; Hernadez 1999; Hirschman, Kasinitz,). This scholarship generally recognizes that the processes of adaptation and assimilation among new immigrants may be different from those experienced by earlier European immigrants. Most notably, it has been suggested that theories of assimilation developed in response to earlier waves of immigration in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century are no longer adequate for understanding the experiences of the new immigrants. By popular accounts, classical assimilation theories considered assimilation to be part of the process of upward mobility for immigrants and their offspring. Each subsequent generation was thought to achieve higher social and economic status as it became more culturally and linguistically similar to the American middle class. Assimilation and upward mobility were thought to go hand in hand. Some scholarly work on new immigrants, by contrast, suggests that there may no longer be such a straightforward relationship between assimilation and upward mobility[34]

Gans outlines several distinct trajectories that the children of the new immigrants, or the "new second generation," can follow. These paths include downward as well as upward mobility among the possible outcomes. Further developing these ideas as a critique of classical assimilation theory, Portes and Zhou propose the theory of "segmented

[33] Richard Alba, "Immigration and the American Realities of Assimilation and Multiculturalism," *Sociological Forum* 14, no. 1(1999): 3-25
[34] Rumbaut 1997

assimilation." This theory asserts that the United States is a stratified and unequal society, and that therefore different "segments" of society are available to which immigrants may assimilate. Portes and Zhou delineate three possible paths of assimilation that immigrants may take. The first is essentially what is predicted by classical assimilation theory, i.e., increasing acculturation and integration into the American middle class (for brevity, referred to henceforward as Path 1). The second is acculturation and assimilation into the urban underclass, leading to poverty and downward mobility; Path 2. The third, "selective acculturation"[35] is the deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's culture and values, accompanied by economic integration ;Path 3[36]. The theory emphasizes that there is more than one way of "becoming American," and that Americanization is not necessarily beneficial.

Segmented Assimilation Theory's Relation to Race and Ethnicity

Segmented assimilation theory speaks explicitly about both ethnicity and race. Starting with ethnicity, Min Zhou and Alejandro Portes discuss its positive force. They see a "coethnic" community (in other words, a community of people that share a sense of common ethnicity) as beneficial to assimilation. They call the coethnic community the third and most important type of resource available to "confront the challenges of contemporary assimilation," since networks in the coethnic community give "immigrants who join well-established and diversified ethnic groups (…) access from the start to a range of moral and material resources."[37] They point to ethnic/private schools and job opportunities or business apprenticeships as ways to "circumvent outside discrimination and the threat of vanishing mobility ladders. Zhou goes further in claiming that immigrant communities can use "deliberate cultivation of ethnicity" to help children achieve in school, through the help of

[35] Portes and Rumbaut 2001, p.54
[36] Ibid., P,60
[37] Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and its Variants," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences,* 530 (1993):74-96

parental pressure . She sees ethnic networks as social capital, where both support and control can affect children's adaptation. This adaptation is in turn affected by how the ethnic community fits into to the mainstream society. Zhou explains that the coethnic society can function as a mediator and "buffer zone" between an immigrant family and American society.[38] These ideas are not new, of course.

David Ward, in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, says: "Too often the social problems of particular ethnic groups have been related in a simplistic fashion to their segregated residential patterns."[39] He says there are benefits to be had by ethnic geographic concentration, for instance political power, economic advancement, protection and a reinforcement of group solidarity and well-being. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's influential *Beyond the Melting Pot* also discusses some positive effects of ethnic concentration. Speaking of Jews in New York, they credit the ethnic community with benefits like "a strong family life" and "a low rate of alcoholism."[40]

Segmented assimilation scholars claim that race is a factor to be considered in segmented assimilation theory. Portes and Rumbaut say that "in America, race is a paramount criterion of social acceptance that can overwhelm the influence of class background, religion, or language." [41] Zhou and Portes say that "the majority of contemporary immigrants are nonwhite. Although this feature may appear at first glance as an individual characteristic, in reality it is a trait belonging to the host society. Prejudice is not intrinsic to a particular skin color or racial type, and, indeed many immigrants never experienced it in their native lands. It is by virtue of moving into a new social environment, marked by different values and prejudices, that physical features become redefined as a handicap. This bears resemblance to

[38] Ibid. ,P: 86-87
[39] David Ward, "Immigration – Settlement Patterns and Spatial Distribution," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, 496.
[40] - Glazer and Moynihan, 165.
[41] - Portes and Rumbaut, *Legacies*, 47.

what David Roediger calls a long tradition of "Blacks pointing out that race in the US was not a 'Negro problem' but a problem among whites."[42] In a 1997 article, Zhou says that racial discrimination is on-going, not simply a thing of the past. It affects residence, which she points to as the most important element in matters of mobility. Class and race, then, go hand in hand, affecting the schools, neighbourhoods and local environments that confront immigrant and second-generation youth.

Arab American Assimilation

Traditionally, Arab Americans have been described as very assimilated, successful and suburban. This has been the case for those who arrived before WWII. Those who have arrived later have had more divergent paths. As described earlier, the suburban population and the Christian population (often the same people) are more likely to feel "white" than the Dearborn population. In this regard we can conclude that part of the Arab-American community have followed this first path of segmented assimilation.

Are Arab Americans Following the First Path of Segmented Assimilation?

There is some evidence to support that this has occurred among those who that live on the suburbs. This population is also the most likely to choose a white identity, according to the DAAS.[43] There for there is an indication that a choice of white identity is connected to upward mobility.

There are many ways to report or analyze upward mobility. Segmented assimilation scholars use determinants such as school achievement and attainment of professional occupations. According to the American Community Survey of 2006-2008, Arab Americans

[42] -Roediger, 6.
[43] American Community Survey, 3-year estimates, 2006-2008, using American Fact Finder, U.S. Census Bureau, <www.census.gov>

in Metro Detroit have similar levels of college and graduate school enrollment as the general population of the same area (27% for Arab Americans, 24.8% for general population). The attainment of education for the 25 and older population shows that the Arab-American population also has similar percentages as the general population regarding Bachelor's degrees or Graduate and Professional degrees. When looking at "Management, professional or related occupations," the Arab-American population is slightly behind the general population (35% versus 31.7%).[44] Arab-American in Metro Detroit has similar levels of educational and professional achievement as the general population of the same area.

These numbers change when we look at the differences by county. The three focus counties of this study are Wayne, Macomb and Oakland. Dearborn and the city of Detroit are in Wayne County. The focus area of this study is Wayne, Oakland and Macomb County, Michigan. These three counties were chosen for two reasons: First, because that's where the majority of Michigan's Arab Americans live. Second, to be able to compare city dwellers to those that live in the suburbs. Dearborn (in Wayne County) is the most concentrated Arab American enclave in the country. In Wayne County, the numbers for Arab-American college and graduate school enrollment are 1% below that of the general population. The levels of educational attainment for the 25 and over population are 1% above the general population for Bachelor's degrees, and 1% below for Graduate or Professional degrees. For "Management, professional and related occupations," the Arab Americans have nearly identical numbers to the general population.[45]

In Oakland County, school enrollment for Arab Americans in college or graduate school is significantly higher than the general population, at 38% and 26.6% respectively. The educational attainment of the population of 25 and over, however, is more or less the same. The numbers for "Management, professional and related occupations" show the general

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

population at 6% higher occurrence than the Arab-American population (45.4% to 39.6%). This means that in Wayne County, the Arab-American population's education and occupation does not significantly differ from the general population.[46]

In the third county, Macomb, school enrollment in college or graduate school is 10% higher than the general population. The attainment of Bachelor's and Graduate degrees is similar to the general population. The attainment of Bachelor's and Graduate degrees is similar to the general population. Employment in "Management, professional and related occupations" is lower for Arab Americans than for the general population, with 26.1% compared to 32.6%.[47]

The DAAS reports that "Arabs and Chaldeans have roughly the same percentage of college and advanced degrees as the general population," What we can gather from this, is that Arab Americans in the suburbs are ahead of the general population regarding school enrollment in higher education, but in the city they are approximately the same as the surrounding population. In respect to attainment of college degrees, the Arab-American population more or less mirrors the general population of the area, both in the city, and in the suburbs. The numbers for Management and Professional occupations show that Arab Americans in the city are better off than the general population, where in the suburbs it is the other way around.[48] a similar finding to the American Community Survey.

The DAAS uses a different categorization for occupation, and says that "Arabs and Chaldeans are more likely to work in sales, office, and administrative positions" than the general population (38% to 25%). The numbers for "management, business, or financial occupations" show Arabs and Chaldeans trailing behind by 4%. When it comes to professional occupations, both the Arabs and Chaldeans, and the general population have a

[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid .
[48] Ibid .

22% participation rate.[49] Neither the American Community Survey, nor the DAAS show the differences within this category according to choice of racial identification. It is therefore difficult to say how these findings are affected by race. The only conclusion to be drawn at this point is that when comparing Arab Americans to the general population (using DAAS data) in matters of education, the suburban Arab Americans are ahead of their fellow suburbanites, a pattern that does not hold true for the city dwellers. Employment in management and the professions show the suburban Arab Americans trailing behind the general population, which is not true for the city populations.

Are Arab Americans Following the Second Path of Segmented Assimilation?

The second described path of segmented assimilation is "rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity."[50] Zhou and Portes point out the importance of a strong and diversified coethnic community.

Portes and Rumbaut speak highly of the benefits to a strong ethnic community in blocking downward assimilation. "The varying character of co-ethnic communities determines the level of social capital available to immigrant families. Social capital, grounded on ethnic networks, provides a key resource in confronting obstacles to successful adaptation."[51]

They point to economic opportunities and reinforcement of parental authority in ethnic networks as key to the success of the second generation. They continue by saying that "social capital depends less on the relative economic or occupational success of immigrants than on the density of ties among them.

The Dearborn Arab community is known for its strength. Arabs have been in the area for about a century. Kayyali explains that the Dearborn enclave was the only Arab-American

[49]Ibid .
[50] Zhou and Portes, 82.
[51] Portes and Rumbaut, Legacies, 64-65.

cluster to survive the Americanization and assimilatory efforts of the early 20th century.[52]The community has powerful institutions (notably ACCESS and the Arab American and Chaldean Council, ACC), and has gained political influence as well as political representation. Ron talks about his (former) city: "Two of the 7 members of the city council are Arab Americans, one male and one female. The Chief of Police is a 3rd generation Arab American. The recently retired Fire Chief is 2nd generation Arab American."[53] Baker and Shryock point out the diversity of agencies, businesses, organizations and institutions in Arab Detroit, and say that "despite obvious success in the small business sector, most Arabs in greater Detroit are not entrepreneurs; they can be found in all sectors of the local economy and at all income levels."[54] They continue on to say that "no other [Arab-American] enclave rivals Dearborn in size or political prominence." Sally Howell and Jamal claim that Arab Detroit is "exceptional," saying that

> Michigan's Arabs, through the work of myriad individuals and the efforts of many successful ethnic institutions, have been incorporated to a remarkable degree into local structures of economic, social, and political capital. At the national level, by contrast, Arabs have found their efforts to organize and influence governmental policies (…) blocked.[55]

After 9/11, Arabs in the Detroit area fared better than their coethnics in other cities in America. Howell and Jamal analyze data from the DAAS and compare to other national polls, and conclude that Detroit is a contrast to Arab America as a whole. Arab Detroiters experienced less discrimination and violence, worried less about their future, and were less willing to forgo civil liberties in exchange for security after 9/11, than Arab Americans

[52] Kayyali, 43
[53] Ron interview.
[54] Baker and Shryock in Citizenship and Crisis, 5.
[55] -Howell and Jamal in Citizenship and Crisis, 71.

nationally.[56] It is important to remember that in this particular context, the Arab-American enclave, though more demographically dense in Dearborn, must be understood to include suburban Arab Americans as well.

The combination of the density of Arab Americans, and great demographic and the economic diversity is a sign of a healthy ethnic community. This is what Portes, Rumbaut, and Zhou all claim can help block the likelihood of downward assimilation, and instead be a way to "upward assimilation combined with biculturalism."[57]The high levels of bilingualism are an indicator of this biculturalism. The same are the similar statements made by several of the respondents about their biculturalism.

It is difficult to make any conclusions about whether or not Arab Americans in Detroit are following the second path of segmented assimilation. The literature based on the DAAS findings, along with other studies, would seem to suggest that the ethnic community of Dearborn is the typical environment that segmented assimilation scholars point to as beneficial to the second trajectory of segmented assimilation. Yet the experiences of the informants show that they see both benefits and downsides to this ethnic concentration.

Are Arab Americans Following the Third Path of Segmented Assimilation?

The third path of segmented assimilation is assimilation - not to the mainstream culture, but to the underclass - leading to permanent poverty, often called downward assimilation. This is usually characterized by inner-city immigrant youth adapting the values and norms of existing inner-city cultures, often marred by crime, high drop-out rates from school, and drug use. Zhou and Portes note three features that "create vulnerability to downward assimilation:"

[56] Ibid. , 76-77
[57] Portes and Rumbaut, Legacies, 63.

color, location, and absence of mobility ladders.[58] The first, color, has been discussed at length in this chapter. Though Arab Americans do not have a clear "color choice," it can be argued that they are often seen as a "people of color" and sometimes see themselves as the same.

Detroit, however, does have a clear color profile. It is a majority black city, with the American Community Survey from 2006-2008 reporting 83% African American inhabitants. The inner-city youth that the Arab immigrants' children could be expected to assimilate to, are therefore black. Detroit ranks as one of four large U.S. cities with the lowest median income, and highest poverty rates.[59] Detroit has the unfortunate reputation of violent crime and high murder rates. In a 2007 article, Forbes Magazine has Detroit topping the list of most murderous cities in America (based on statistics from the FBI). "Detroit's murder rate is more than 8% higher than the country's second most murderous city, Baltimore."[60] A 2009 Forbes article names Detroit as the nation's most dangerous city, with a number of crime syndicates and gangs operating in the city.

It is clear, then, that Detroit has an urban underclass, and that according to segmented assimilation theory, this underclass could be a draw to the neighboring ethnic enclaves' disenchanted youth. However, this does not seem to be the case. One reason for this could be the Arab Americans' relationship to African Americans and color. Shryock claims that Arab Americans have kept a "strategic distance from black identities" as part of a cultivation of a white ethnic identity.[61] He follows by saying that "outright identification with African Americans among Arabs, (…) is virtually nonexistent." Kayyali says much of the same, speaking of Arabs using distance from other races as part of their assimilation to an

[58] Zhou and Portes, 83.
[59] American Community Survey, 3-year estimates, 2006-2008, using American Fact Finder, U.S. Census Bureau, <www.census.gov>
[60] CensusPressRelease,<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/income_wealth/010583.html> (12 February 2010).
[61] Shryock in Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11, 95.

"American middle-class lifestyle," specifically setting "themselves apart from African Americans."[62]

At the same time, Kayyali says that on a national and on a local level, "Arab Americans have good relations with African Americans." Shryock quotes Lisa Majaj advising other Arab-American writers that "our experience has shown us, time and again, that our formal status as white is merely honorary, and is quickly revoked in the wake of political events (…), we need to probe links with other groups of color." [63] However, Shryock says, the identification between "blackness" and Arab Americans' identity is largely restricted to media, film, music and art. While Arab Americans may not understand or wish to be linked to black culture, Shryock and Baker point to studies that show that whites and blacks alike in the Detroit region prefer more social distance from Arab Americans than from other words, the distrust and dislike goes both ways. This may affect the likelihood of Arab youth assimilating to a black culture.

The second vulnerability factor (after color), according to Zhou and Portes, is location. The close contact between minority and immigrant youth "exposes second-generation children to the adversarial sub-culture developed by marginalized native youth to cope with their own difficult situation."[64] Dearborn borders the city of Detroit. There would seem to be plenty of opportunities for downward assimilation, yet the Arab Americans have not entered the Detroit underclass in significant numbers. Though some of the inhabitants of Dearborn are at the lower end of the income scale, there is little evidence that they are joining Detroit's gang-and drug culture.

[62] Kayyali, 142
[63] Shryock in Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11, 100.
[64] - Zhou and Portes, 83.

One exception is important to note, namely the existence of a gang called the Chaldean Mafia. The FBI describes the gang as "predominantly of Iraqi nationals, operated a narcotics distribution network moving drugs from Phoenix and San Diego to Detroit. Involved in violent crimes such as homicide, assault, kidnaping, armed robbery, and arson, the gang used intimidation and brutal force to move the narcotics and collect drug proceeds."[65]

The FBI has arrested over a hundred individuals involved, and seized large quantities of narcotics. The National Criminal Justice Reference Service (Administered by the U.S. Department of Justice) calls the Chaldean Mafia "a highly exclusive organization," with ties to international drug cartels, whose focus is "obtaining income rather than 'representing' or generating public attention."[66] In this sense, the Chaldean Mafia is not a typical street gang. Its exclusivity means that it is not likely to recruit new members from the Arab-American population in general.

The third factor creating vulnerability to downward assimilation, according to Zhou and Portes is the absence of mobility ladders in a new "hourglass economy."[67] The way to combat this potential problem is through education and financial resources, combined with parental guidance in providing proof of "the viability of aspirations for upward mobility."[68]

As we have seen in an earlier section of this chapter, the Arab-American population is not trailing significantly behind the general population when it comes to education, at least not when looking at the youngest segment of the population, which includes much of the second generation. In some instances the Arab population is ahead of the general population in higher education. The DAAS shows that "Arabs and Chaldeans have roughly the same percentage of college and advanced degrees as the general population, but a higher percentage has less than

[65] Federal Bureau of Investigation, <http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/ngic/success.htm> (15 February 2010).
[66] 81NationalCriminalJusticeReferenceService
<http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=200792> (15 February 2010).
[67] Zhou and Portes, 85.
[68] Ibid., 90

a high school degree. Those born in the U.S. [ie the second or third generation] have more education than either the general population or Arabs and Chaldeans born abroad."[69]

The American Community Survey shows Arab Americans in all three counties having approximately twice as many people with less than a high school diploma, compared to the general population. The numbers reflect those that are 25 years and older, and could be both first, second and third generation Arab Americans. There is no evidence that the Arab-American second generation is assimilating to an urban culture where school drop-out rates are high.[70]

At the same time, the concentration of Arab businesses and organizations can provide jobs and training that Arab-American youth might not have access to outside the community due to prejudice. The DAAS reports that a slightly higher number of Arabs and Chaldeans own their own business, compared to the general population (19% to 14%). 511 It is interesting to note that among immigrants, "business owners report the highest levels of income," while among the American born, "higher incomes are associated with higher levels of education rather than with business ownership."

In summary regarding the third trajectory, there is little evidence to support a trend of downward assimilation among the Arab-American second generation in Metro Detroit. Even though Aswad points to unemployment, some drugs and alcohol, some illegal activities, increased welfare, and some role reversal amongst Lebanese Americans in the 1980s, 86 there is little indication that this is a continuing problem on a large scale. Overall, the Arab-American youth in Metro Detroit are seemingly being "sheltered" by the strength of their community. Or perhaps the reasons can be found in the relationship between Arabness and color, where an association with black Americans is not seen as desirable.

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[69] American Community Survey, 3-year estimates, 2006-2008, using American Fact Finder, U.S. Census Bureau, <www.census.gov>

[70] Ibid.

Religion and Arab Americans' s Assimilation Trajectory

The United States, as a whole, is a very religious country. Despite – or maybe because of - the fact that the Constitution and the Bill of Rights explicitly demand separation of church and state, and free exercise of religion, Americans are more religious than citizens of other Western countries. It is well known that for immigrants, religious organizations function as a connection between the Old Country and their new home. Churches and other houses of worship are a meeting place where the immigrant can socialize with others from their home country, and sometimes even from the same village or town.[71]

Religious institutions provide financial, emotional and practical support for immigrants and their families, as well as giving the immigrants a place to belong a sense of identity in America.[72] For instance, the Detroit mosque study shows that most mosques offer certain social services like food donation, substance abuse programs, prison programs and clothing donation; and over 80% provide cash assistance. Marcus Lee Hansen said much of the same, pointing to religious morality as an emotional stabilizer in the new land.[73] For many immigrants, religious practice is also a way to teach children about their heritage, and keep them from becoming "too American." One way to ensure this is through religious education. Findings of the Detroit mosque study shows that participants see Islamic education as the top priority for their mosques, and this "demonstrates the deep concern of Muslims for their children – a concern that their children be raised as Muslims and that they avoid the danger of adopting un-Islamic practices."[74]

[71] - Aswad, "The Lebanese Muslim Community," 181-182.
[72] - Gleason, Speaking of Diversity, 251; Alba, Raboteau, and DeWind in Immigration and Religion In America, 6.
[73] Ibid., 252
[74] - David J. O'Brien, "The Changing Contours of American Religion," in Religion and Immigration, 22; Alba, Raboteau, and DeWind in Immigration and Religion in America, 2.

Arab Christians constitute a majority of Arab Detroit and of Arab Americans nationally. They are diverse in their national origins, as well as their religious orientations. Common for all is that they came from Muslim majority countries, and some from Islamic states. Accustomed to being a minority, perhaps they had a benefit right from the start, when they arrived and joined America's multitude of minority populations. Most scholars agree that for these earlier immigrants, a Christian religion gave them significant advantages in gaining access to American society. Randa A. Kayyali writes that Christians were more likely to work as rural peddlers than Muslims, since Christians "could reach a comfort level with the farm wives by quoting from the Bible and finding a religious commonality with their customers."[75]

Muslims, on the other hand, arrived in a country without common religious traditions, or houses of worship, and arrived in smaller numbers than Christians. Due to religious discrimination, Muslims were unable to integrate, despite the higher education levels of these second wave immigrants. In a recent volume about Arab Americans, Sally Howell and Amaney Jamal write that Arab Christians are more integrated in the American middle class than Arab Muslims due to having been present in the country longer.[76]

The fact that Arab Christians are more likely to live in the suburbs, than in the city, shows a higher degree of assimilation. Like the debate over the priority of the chicken and the egg, one could question what came first, the move to the suburbs or the assimilation; but nonetheless it is a self-perpetuating cycle. Suburban living brings Arab Christians into contact with mainstream middle class Americans at a much higher degree than living in an urban environment does. The Detroit Arab American Study (DAAS) found that only 5% of Christian Arabs live in or near Dearborn, the rest are dispersed in suburbs to the north, east

[75] -Kayyali, 40.
[76] Howell and Jamal in Citizenship and Crisis, 110.

and west of Detroit. Yet it is too simple to rely entirely on time of arrival to explain assimilation, although it does have an effect[77]

In contrast, the same study found that two thirds of Arab Muslims in Metropolitan Detroit live in Dearborn or Detroit, rather than in the suburbs. An exception to this pattern is the Iraqi Chaldeans, who have established an urban enclave along Seven Mile Road, many of them running grocery, liquor and convenience stores. Surrounded by urban blight, many of these Chaldeans move to the suburbs when they can afford to[78] in line with the general pattern of Christian and Muslim settlement. In the 2009 book about Arab Detroit, Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11, the editors say that one-third of Muslims have not finished high school, and they are less likely to have college education than Christian Arabs[79].

Arab Christians use distance from Arab Muslims to gain acceptance, and this need became more pressing in the aftermath of 9/11. Read says that "Christian Arab Americans may be able to use their Christian identity as bridge to the American mainstream, thereby distancing themselves from 9/11 and demonstrating that they are not terrorists or terrorist sympathizers."[80] This strategy is not unique to Arabs, it has been used by many immigrants to the United States as a means to easier acceptance and assimilation.

The Arab Muslim community in Dearborn and Metro Detroit provides an example of this type of assimilation, where both the emergence of an American Islam, and the growth of Islam among the second generation grant Detroit's Arab Muslims the support and strength needed to prevent downward assimilation. The support can be in the form of peer and parental guidance found in mosques and religious schools, ethnic or religious pride, or kin networks in religious institutions that can assist in finding jobs and services. Religious institutions can be

[77] Ibid., 115
[78] Baker and Shryock in Citizenship and Crisis, 5; Hassoun 49-50
[79] Ibid., 51-52
[80] - Read in Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11, 305.

schools, mosques, or other organizations. These institutions provide financial and practical help or training in order to make sense of American society in a way that ultimately can lead to acculturation or assimilation.

Bankston and Zhou say that church membership

> Is a prime source of identity and motivation precisely because it is a focus for organizing the social relations of a group. First-generation immigrants perceive it as the one element of real continuity between their country of origin and their new home and as an effective strategy for linking themselves with their American born or raised children while acquiring acceptance in the host society.[81]

It is important to remember that psychological well-being is just as important as economic well-being in regards to feeling at home in America, and one may well lead to the other. Second-generation immigrants are often described as being trapped between two cultures, and feeling alienated as a result. The privileging of a religious identity over an ethnic identity, along with participation in mainstream society, allows youth to remain connected to God, their parents and the old country, while at the same time being fully American. The danger of role reversal and dissonant acculturation is thereby avoided, and Muslim Arabs are free to become part of a multicultural America.

The main hindrance they face in this endeavor is Islamophobia, which is prevalent in American life and media at this point in time. Yet, the support and degree of homogeneity in Arab Detroit shelters them somewhat from this. Therefore it is possible to claim that Detroit's Arab Muslims are following the second trajectory of segmented assimilation theory. This section will start by discussing the emergence of an Americanized Islam, followed by a

[81] Bankston and Zhou, 19.

discussion of the growth in religiosity among young Arab Muslims, that ties these developments to assimilation.

Another element of this Americanization is the changing role of women in American mosques. In the Middle East, in general, women are not a major part of mosque life. Some mosques prohibit their entry, and some limit their worship to segregated areas of the mosque. In America, and in Detroit, women have other options. Many women have been instrumental in the building of mosques. Women may sit on the boards, or teach in Islamic schools. The Detroit mosque study found that "in Detroit, mosques are still the domains of men, but Muslim women have a small but significant presence."[82]

Islam is fast becoming America's second largest faith106 There are several reasons for the growth of Islam in America, for instance international trends, Islamophobia, and new immigration from Muslim countries. Muslim immigration has shown a marked increase since the 1990s.107 The New Immigrant Survey Pilot (from 2001) found that Muslims are the second largest group of new immigrants, although Arab emigrants are not coming in high numbers. The largest group of Muslim immigrants is from Pakistan.[83]

The second-generation is of course also affected by increased religiosity. In many cases they are more religious than their parents. In a famous quote, Haddad has said of Islam that "the grandparents fought for independence, their children for nationalism and socialism and their grandchildren for Islam."[84] The Detroit Mosque study revealed that the older participants were more likely to wish for a flexible approach to Islamic practice, than the younger participants, who may often be second generation. Cainkar's research among second-generation Arab Muslims in Chicago shows that Islamic revival among youth is clearly related to discrimination faced in America. She says that Islam provides "meaning and

[82] Esposito, 3; Haddad, Smith and Esposito in Religion and Immigration, 12; Carroll, 102.
[83] Ibid., 102
[84] Ibid., 200

resilience" and helps them "cope with their particular local experiences as homogenized, dehumanized and voiceless Arabs in America."[85]

Societal reception, on the other hand, has had a major impact on Muslim Arabs' possibilities. Many Americans are unwilling to accept Arabs, perhaps especially Muslims, as true Americans. Writing about hate crime in the form of attacks on individuals, mosques and businesses after 9/11, John Corrigan and Lynn S. Neal make the claim that "the interpretation of these groups and their religious traditions as 'foreign' justified action against them, all in the name of upholding American values and protecting American liberty."[86] The authors name the contemporary media as part of the problem, and say that it depicts Islam as a violent religion saying that is "antithetical to the American way of life."

As discussed in the previous chapter, the views portrayed by the media, about Muslims, are tied to American foreign policy in the Middle East. Since the United States generally has favored Israel, many Arabs feels that they are enemies "by default." The fact that most Middle Eastern extremists are Muslim has led to identification of Islam as America's enemy abroad.

[85] Cainkar, "Islamic Revival," 100
[86] John Corrigan and Lynn S. Neal, eds., Religious Intolerance in America (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010): 9.

Conclusion

The main conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that the community is too diverse to be described as following one specific path of assimilation. Not only is the assimilation trajectory affected by Christian and Muslim affiliation, it is affected by geography, societal reception and class. The lower socio-economic conditions that condition the opportunities of Southend youth are unlikely to improve in the near future. The geographical isolation, the low levels of social capital of the new immigrants along with their histories of mistreatment, and the discrimination they face by both mainstream Americans, but also by Arab Americans, leads us to believe that the children growing up today face some serious barriers to successful incorporation. Looking beyond the Southend, the Arab Americans living elsewhere in Metro Detroit seem to be well-integrated, even if they are religiously segregated. Their strength lies in the fact that they can be part of a larger Arab Detroit.

To make it short, most Arab Muslims are following the second trajectory of segmented assimilation, while most Arab Christians are following the first trajectory. There is little evidence to support downward assimilation in Arab Detroit's religious communities, but current developments leave the Muslims on the Southend vulnerable, especially in the face of Islamophobia, where this population seems to be the personification of 'the Muslim' that America fears.

General Conclusion

The early Arab immigrants changed their perspectives about identity and adapted themselves in to American society. This occurred out of necessity, coincidence and social compulsion. Since they were in relative small numbers in the United States, it was necessary for the Arab immigrants to seek contact, live among and marry members from the other Arab religious groups, with whom they would have had only superficial contact in the motherland. Coincident with the initial preference for the profession of peddling, which required constant contact with native-born Americans, the Arab

immigrants learned English and acquired new American values very quickly. The Americans were keen to ethnically identifiable immigrants. This social compulsion made the Arab immigrants redefine themselves in collective and ethnic terms, regardless of differences in religion. These were, however, always a-political terms, the mostly used being 'Syrian', since that was the province where many Arab immigrants came from. The collective ethnic identity that was being formed and acquired paradoxically meant that the Arab immigrants had to relinquish traditionalist and sectarian values. The cultural and religious ties with the homeland were initially strong, but gradually diminished as new generations of Arabs grew up in the United States. The relative economic success of the early Arab Americans also accelerated their assimilation into mainstream middle-class American society.

After World War II, several domestic and international developments were ground for the cultivation of an entirely novel, political ethnic identity by the Arab Americans. The new Arab immigrants, who were mostly Muslim, introduced the assimilated Arab immigrants to Arab nationalism and political awareness. The influences of the emancipation- and third world movements as well as growing anti-Arab sentiments among mainstream Americans in the 1960s, as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflicts, only accelerated the forming of a nationalistic identity among Arab Americans. The various nationwide organizations that were

established since the 1960s were a ventilation of the new political and ethnic 'minority' identity embraced by Arab Americans. These organizations covered all corners of the political spectrum, but none were oriented on religion. This was consistent with this Arab American identity of the 1960s and 1970s, since it crossed religious lines and emphasized the value of 'being an Arab' above all other attributes.

The global rise of Islamism, which gradually dominated other political ideologies in the Arab world, had its effects too among Arab Americans. Christian and non-Islamist Muslim Arab Americans beheld this development with mistrust throughout the 1980s and 1990s. They had a profound fear that the assumption of an Islamic political identity by some Muslim Arab Americans would mean the death of Arab American integration. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 marked a turning point for the four decades old secular Arab American identity. It is still unclear which direction the Arab Americans will take in terms of identity and self-perception. It is feasible that they will, because of increasing stigmatization by the American public and mistrust amongst each other, turn back to some form of their pre-World War II sectarian identities. Another possibility is that an eventual increase in discrimination, stigmatization and exclusion by the non-Arab American public will consolidate and strengthen the bond between Arab Americans. Consequently the cross-religious Arab American identity will be strengthened.

The definition of assimilation conceived for this paper was that assimilation means going from being and "other" to being "one of us." Have Arab Americans assimilated according to this definition? The answer lies in whether Americans can accept Arabs and Muslims as "one of us." There are no other all-encompassing barriers to incorporation – Arab Americans as a whole resemble mainstream Americans in many regards. They are religious, they are well-educated, they work in a variety of fields, and they participate in American politics. The strength of the community means that Arab Detroiters can be part of an "us," even if they are

considered “other” by parts of the mainstream. Of course, first-generation immigrants can be quite different than the average American, but the question posed by segmented assimilation is whether the second-generation is able to assimilate. This thesis sought societal acceptance as the main barrier to Arab-American assimilation.

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Figure1 : Religious Affiliation of Arabs Americans.

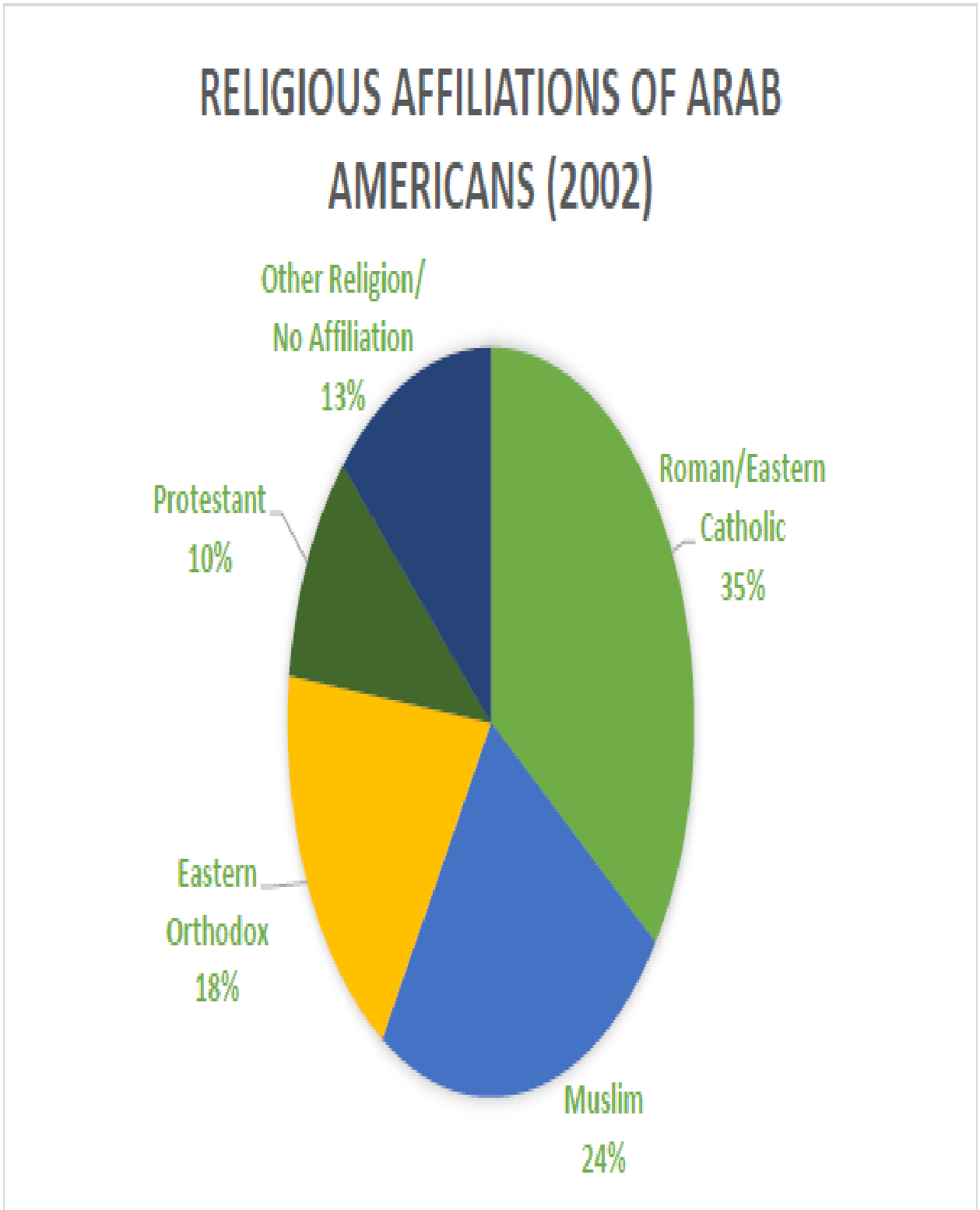

Figure 2 : Education For Arabs Americans.

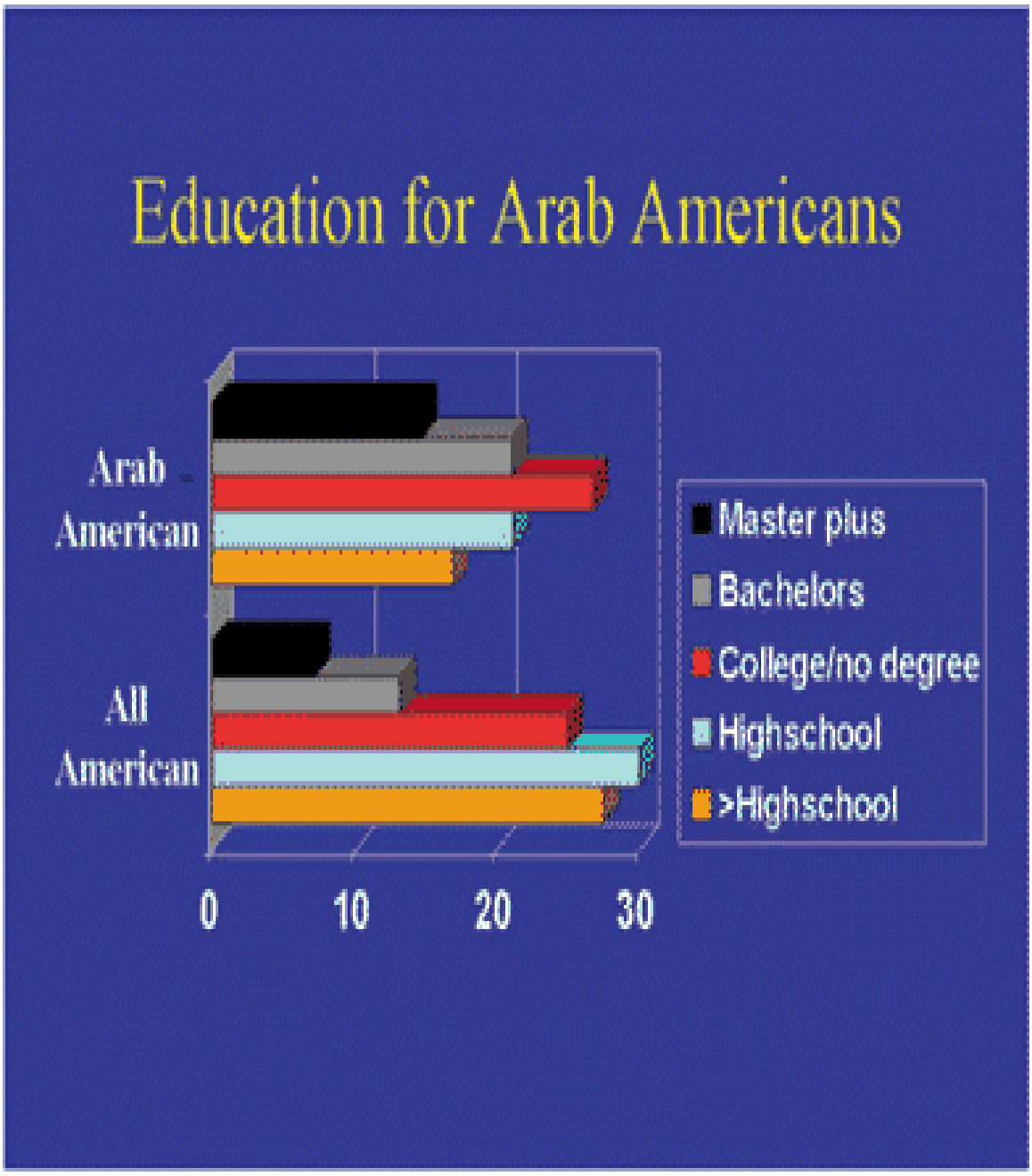

Figure 3 : Ethinc Heritage of Arab Americans.

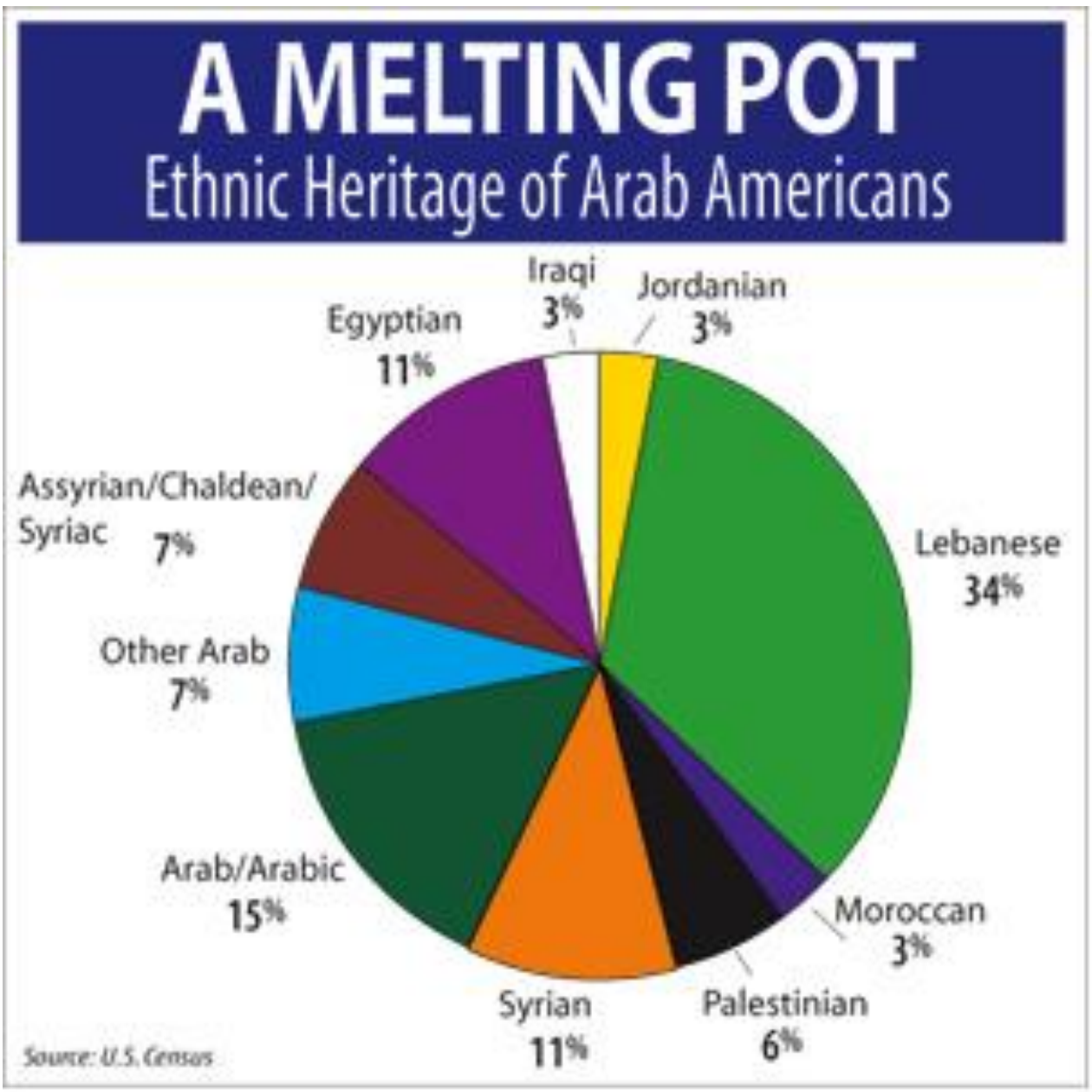

Figure 4 : Executive Jobs.