

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Tlemcen
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of English



**The Problem of Identity in the American Diaspora:
the Case of Immigrants from the MENA Region (1880-
2000)**

**A Dissertation submitted as a partial fulfillment for
The Master Degree in English Studies**

Submitted by:

Ibtissam KHATIR

Supervised by:

Dr. Faiza SENOUCI

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Dedications

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Abstract

Globalization has made this world smaller, interdependent, and heterogeneous, and with it came the concept multiculturalism and the concerns on identity and individuality, clashes among different cultures became inevitable. All this can be linked with large process of immigration that the world has known in the late 19th century and the 20th century. While immigrants leave their home country for many reasons, by choice or necessity, the impacts that result affect both the individual and the society. The U.S. is considered one of the countries that enjoy its cultural diversity. In the case of Arab immigrants, they came to the U.S. either seeking a better life, or fleeing prosecution. They come from completely different culture, language, and religion. This move makes them prone to face one or more challenges: assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization. This paper tried to research the acculturation process of immigrants from the MENA region in the U.S and the results on their identity from the first major wave in 1880 to 2000. Results show a variety of potential barriers that hindered the Arab immigrants from successfully integrating into the United States society. Cultural and religious differences, distinctions in moral and ethical values, perception of gender relations, demonization of the Arab population in mass media, and discrimination are the major factors causing the overall struggles of the acculturation process.

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List of Acronyms

AAI: Arab American Institute

AAUG: Arab American University Graduates

ACS: American Community Survey

ADC: Anti-Discrimination Committee

CELSI: Central European Labour Studies Institute

FY: Fiscal Year

LPR: Legal Permanent Residence

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization

UAE: United Arab Emirates

US: United States

General Introduction:

The United States is known as “a nation of immigrants” and “land of opportunity”, one of its most known images is the arrival of the thousands of immigrants at Ellis Island shores (1892-1924), that then through hardship climbed their way to success, Arguably the most recognizable national symbol, the statue of liberty, is dually linked to immigration and national consciousness; its inscription reads in part:

“Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”¹

These words represent the utopia that the United State of America tries to presents to the world, as the land where dreams come true if you work hard enough. But is the image really true to reality and does these new arrivals to America truly warmly and wholeheartedly welcome as the poem suggest, or do they have to face upon arrival worst hardship then what they left behind them, were they able to easily assimilate to this new society or were they forced to leave behind their culture and practices in order to adapt themselves into the American society.

The present paper work try to identify the effects migration had on the immigrants who came from the MENA region at the end of the 19th century and onwards till 2000, first by giving a

¹ Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus”, this sonnet was written in 1883 and, in 1903, engraved on a bronze plaque and mounted inside the lower level of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_Colossus (Accessed: September 12, 2016).

meaning to words such as identity and migration, then by tackling the presence of MENA immigrants to America, the waves that marked their coming to the states, and the reasons behind them, but more importantly the way they adapted and acculturated to the American society and their relationship with the other Americans.

The first chapter entitled: Identity and Migration, intend to discuss identity and the impacts of migration on it. Debates over identity dominate today's psychological field, more and more psychologists delve themselves onto research on the subjects. These debates may be new in some of their particular concerns (the different types of identity, the society impacts on it and vice versa), but many of the questions raised and arguments presented have been deeply familiar from the first coherent thoughts of men (questions about the self and personal identity). These questions are found in an even greater number for persons who have a hard time defining their selves specifically such as immigrants who are uprooted from their lands, their cultures into completely new ones. In the case of immigrants, the individual, more than any other ordinary person express an identity crisis; as an immigrant has also to deal with the problem of integration and such found themselves with the problem of how do they identify themselves according to their country and culture of birth or according to the country they moved to?

The second chapter entitled: MENA Diaspora in the US, gives a historical background on the MENA diaspora in the US, from the first wave in the 1880's to 2000. Most of these immigrants left their motherlands because of the economic and social circumstances there. The chapter gives an overview of the reasons that these immigrants had to leave, as well as their process of settlements, assimilation and acculturation in the American society. The chapter also attempts to give a view on the identity struggle of these individuals who will come to be known as Arab Americans and their relationships with the other Americans and their integration in their society.

Debates over immigration often turn on understandings of cultural difference and on changing expectations of how foreign-born people should adapt to and participate in the host society.

There have always been two primary paths to citizenship: One is through being born in the country. The other is through naturalization, the legal process by which individuals apply for and are admitted to citizenship. But beyond this legal process, What is the process of assimilation, or absorption into a new culture in our case the American culture? Can Arab immigrants retain the customs or languages of their countries of origin and participate sufficiently in American society or are these practices in conflict? The paper below is going to try and answer all these questions.

The paper will be divided in two parts, first it will give the meaning behind identity and migration trying to define them as well as the different types and parts that they encompass.

Then we will pass to the part of the Arabs in America, first by giving a background on when and why they came to the United State of America, then to their paths to naturalization and if they assimilated and acculturated to the American society and finally their relationship with the Americans.

Chapter one

Identity and migration

Introduction:

Among the major contemporary themes in the field of Social Studies, the renewed concern with questions of identity occupies a central place. Identity concerns (augmented by migration flows) lie at the heart of many psychologist questions.

While migration is one of the main factors to the richness in diversity of cultures, ethnicities and races in developed countries. Individuals who migrate or immigrants experience multiple stresses that can impact their mental well-being, including the loss of cultural norms, religious customs, and social support systems, adjustment to a new culture and changes in identity and their concept of self. Identity indeed has increasingly become an important issue in modern human and social sciences.

Since the 1980s, research has extensively explored how meanings, expectations, and conflicts are associated with the different locational ties of individuals and groups; how individuals represent themselves using one or another element that constitutes their identity; how these elements can be categorized; and how multiple identities are compounded and negotiated when they conflict².

The literature on this topic is so rich that it is nearly impossible to present an exhaustive overview of the different contributions in this field. However, there are few works devoted to the influence of migration on identity formation and transformation. The research below is going to study the relationship and impacts of both migration and identity issues on the individual

1. Definitions of Identity:

Identity has been known under many meanings such as: “The fact of being who or what a person or thing is”, “The characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is”³ or “who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others”⁴.

Identity was also described as “The difference or character that marks off an individual from the rest of the same kind, selfhood”, as well as “A name or persona (the mask or appearance one presents to the world) by which one is known”⁵

² Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “*Beyond ‘Identity’*” Theory and Society. 29 (Kluwer Academic Publishers, Printed in Netherlands, 2000), 4-9.

³ Oxford English Dictionary, (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/identity>, accessed on January 03, 2016).

⁴ Cambridge Dictionary, (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/identity>, accessed on January 03, 2016).

⁵ Wiktionary, web dictionary, (<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/identity>, accessed on January 03, 2016).

Many psychologists also had different definitions of identity such as: “Identity ... is a concept that imprisons (as does much in sociology) nor detaches (as does much in philosophy and psychology) persons from their social and symbolic universes, so it has over the years retained a generic force that few concepts in our field have.”⁶

While Bhabha said that “Identity is never a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality.”⁷

All these definitions give us the idea that identity represents the self and that every person is different from the other, the identities vary and that they are also greatly affected by the environment a person lives in.

2. Types of Identity:

There are many types of identity but most psychologists who studied the subject agree on the ones below:

2.1 Personal Identity:

The issue of personal identity and its deterrents has always been of concern for many philosophers. It deals with philosophical questions that arise about ourselves as people or persons, it contrast to questions about ourselves that arise about us being living things, conscious

⁶ Kingsley Davis, *Population and Resources: Fact and Interpretation Population and Development Review Vol. 16, Supplement: Resources, Environment, and Population: Present Knowledge, Future Options* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 105.

⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994), 51.

beings, material objects, or the like. Many of these questions occur to nearly all of us now and again: Who am I? What am I? When did I begin? What will happen to me when I die?⁸

Personal identity is sometimes discussed under the protean term *self*. And ‘self’ does sometimes mean ‘person’. But it often means something different: some sort of immaterial subject of consciousness, for instance (as in the phrase ‘the myth of the self’)⁹. However, the term is often used without any clear meaning at all.¹⁰

There are two types of Personal Identity first Ascribed Identity; it represents the features of identity that we were born with and thus that we had no choice about, such as: Nationality, Gender/sex, Ethnicity, Social class, Location, Sexuality and First language. Then, there is Achieved Identity which on the other hand represents the features of our identity that we acquired over time as we grow up and build experiences. Such as: Social status position, Religious beliefs, Work role, Relationship status, Family role, belonging to a particular subculture, the goods that you buy.¹¹

⁸ Personal Identity, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-personal/>, accessed on January 06, 2016.

⁹ The mythology of self is primary in the cult of individualism and often begins as paradox, articulating the meaning of "freedom" within a world of political and cultural, in essence, social constraints
(http://public.wsu.edu/~hughesc/myth_of_self.htm, accessed on February 17, 2016)

¹⁰ Personal Identity, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-personal/>, accessed on January 06, 2016.

¹¹ Identity and Hybrid Identity, accessed on February 25, 2016,
https://www.google.dz/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwifhlyxgrXPAhWEXRoKHWBdBCKQFgggMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ocr.org.uk%2FImages%2F178674-identity-and-hybrid-identity-presentation.ppt&usg=AFQjCNGPwNsWuqz3ywEw4CoNpif_LII7DQ

2.2 Social Identity:

Social Identity Theory was developed by Tajfel¹² and Turner¹³ in 1979. The theory was originally developed to understand the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination.

In the Social Identity Theory, a person has not one, “personal identity”, but rather several identities that correspond to different circles of group membership. Different social contexts may trigger an individual to think, feel and act on basis of his personal, family or national “level of self”. Apart from the “level of self”, an individual has multiple “social identities”. Social identity is the individual’s self-concept derived from perceived membership of social groups. In other words, it is an individual-based perception of what defines the “us” associated with any internalized group membership. This can be distinguished from the notion of personal identity which refers to self-knowledge that derives from the individual’s unique attributes.¹⁴

Social Identity Theory asserts that group membership creates in-group/ self-categorization and enhancement in ways that favor the in-group at the expense of the out-group.

¹² Henri Tajfel (formerly Hersz Mordche) (22 June 1919 Włocławek, Poland – 3 May 1982 in Oxford, United Kingdom) was a British social psychologist, best known for his pioneering work on the cognitive aspects of prejudice and social identity theory, as well as being one of the founders of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Tajfel, accessed on March 13, 2016)

¹³ John Charles Turner (September 7, 1947 – July 24, 2011) was a British social psychologist who, along with colleagues, developed the self-categorization theory. Self-categorization theory was developed as a companion theory to the Social identity theory, and the two theories taken together are known as the social identity approach.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Turner_\(psychologist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Turner_(psychologist)), accessed on March 13, 2016)

¹⁴ Social Identity Theory, accessed on March 13, 2016,
https://www.utwente.nl/cw/theorieenoverzicht/Theory%20Clusters/Interpersonal%20Communication%20and%20Relations/Social_Identity_Theory/.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) identify three elements which can be described as the core to the emergence of in-group favoritism:¹⁵

- ❖ The extent to which individuals identify with an in-group to internalize that group membership as an aspect of their self-concept.
- ❖ The extent to which the prevailing context provides ground for comparison between groups.
- ❖ The perceived relevance of the comparison group, which itself will be shaped by the relative and absolute status of the in-group. Individuals are likely to display favoritism when an in-group is central to their self-definition and a given comparison is meaningful or the outcome is contestable.

2.3 Collective Identity:

The theory of collective identity was created by Alberto Melucci¹⁶ (1943/2001); it refers to a person's sense of belonging to a group. The identity of the group, or the 'collective,' becomes a part of the person's individual identity. The idea is that by participating in social activities, a person can develop a sense of belonging and an identity that goes beyond the person. This sense of belonging can become so potent that it takes over other pieces of the person's identity.¹⁷

Melucci believed that collective identity is a process that involves three parts; first the Cognitive

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Alberto Melucci, Italian sociologist, educator, clinical psychologist. Served with the Italian Air Force (1968-1969). Member Italian Sociological Association, Italian Psychological Society, International Sociological Association, European Association for Gestalt Therapy, International Gestalt Therapy Association, International Association for Human Relations.

(<http://prabook.com/web/person-view.html?profileId=271268>, accessed on April 16, 2016)

¹⁷ Collective Identity: Definition and Theory, <http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-collective-identity-definition-theory-examples.html#lesson>, accessed on April 16, 2016.

Definitions; It is concerned with the creation of shared definitions concerning goals, means, and the field of opportunities or constrictions in which the action happens. It is through these shared definitions that a person is able to connect his or her beliefs to those of the larger group, thereby increasing group attachment. Then there is the Network of Active Relationships, It happens between the group participants, i.e. everyone is actively involved with each other through shared experiences. Finally there has to be an Emotional Investment to foster the feelings of common unity among the group and to motivate collective action. Collective identity can be used to explain how social movements happen and sustain over time.¹⁸

3. Globalization and Struggles for Identity:

Globalization is often exclusively associated with worldwide economic integration and the emergence of a borderless global market. However, globalization also involves sweeping changes on the social, cultural and political terrains. It is fair to say that the impact of globalization in the cultural sphere has, most generally, been viewed in a pessimistic light. Typically, it has been associated with the destruction of cultural identities, victims of the accelerating encroachment of a homogenized, westernized, consumer culture. Globalization furthermore entails contradictory processes of, among other things, homogenization¹⁹ and universalization²⁰ on the one hand and localization and differentiation on the other. Various analysts point out that the often contradictory processes of globalization have led to wide-ranging changes in the processes of identity formation that have, in turn, resulted not only in a

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Cultural homogenization is the homogenization of different cultural practices into one blended, uniform cultural practices that do not allow easy identification of the characteristics of many cultures.

(<https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20081008085929AA4XDEo>, accessed on May 05, 2016)

²⁰ Cultural universalization refers to an element, pattern, trait, or institution that is common to all human cultures worldwide. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_universal, accessed on May 06,2016)

flourishing of discourses on identity, but also in struggles of identity involving various minority and marginalized groups. These struggles often show in people who have gone through the migration process or descendent from it.²¹

4. Migration and Identity:

The international migration of people can be described as the core of the process of globalization. Martin Kahanec; Professor at the Central European University in Budapest and Co-founder and Scientific Director of CELSI, Bratislava as well as Klaus F. Zimmermann; Professor of Economics at the University of Bonn and Director of the Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA) said that “People migrate to improve their economic prospects, ensure a more secure living environment, re-unite with their family members, or avoid persecution in their country of origin”²². However, migration is not only the fact of moving geographically from one place to another, when people migrate from a country or culture to another they carry their own knowledge and culture with them. On settling down in the new culture, their cultural identity is likely to change and that is to encourage a degree of belonging; they also attempt to settle down by either assimilation or biculturalism²³.

In the recent years, psychologists and psychiatrists have started to question the issue of migration and its effects on people. Many studies addressed the complexity of migration by analyzing the scene, observing the dynamics and assessing the impact on personal and emotional states. The

²¹ John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Cultural Identity Book* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013) 269-275.

²² Martin Kahanec and Klaus F. Zimmermann, *Migration and Globalization: Challenges and Perspectives for the Research Infrastructure* (IZA Discussion Paper No. 3890, 2008), 2.

²³ Bicultural means having or combining the cultural attitudes and customs of two nations, peoples, or ethnic groups. (Oxford English Dictionary, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bicultural>, accessed on May 06, 2016)

complex relation between migration and possible psychological distress has produced conflicting opinions, mostly related to claims to treat one or the other order of events as a specific etiological category. The fact is that when persons migrate they do not live behind their beliefs or idioms of distress behind, no matter what the circumstances of their migration. Their beliefs influence their idioms of distress, which influence their ways of seeking help.

Worldwide immigration has also led to unprecedented levels of diversity and rapid demographic change, transforming communities across the Atlantic in fundamental ways and challenging closely held notions of national identity, particularly in an era of economic uncertainty. Against this backdrop, a significant backlash against immigration has occurred.

The backlash against immigration has manifested itself in vocal criticisms of “multiculturalism”²⁴. A chorus of world leaders has claimed that the very policies that aimed to weave societies together have instead split them apart, emphasizing difference rather than building community. And as people feel the social fabric of their communities fraying, they have tightened their grip on the things they hold most dear (their identity, language, culture, and values). In response, many countries have narrowed the rights to residence and citizenship and attempted to more rigidly enforce cultural conformity, taking steps whose effect has been to isolate (or in some cases penalize) those who fall outside these norms.²⁵

²⁴ Multiculturalism is the presence of, or support for the presence of several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society. (Oxford English Dictionary, accessed on May 06,2016, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/multiculturalism>)

²⁵ Rethinking National Identity in the Age of Migration, accessed on May 10, 2016, https://www.google.dz/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiNo-amkrXPAhVEXBoKHe0YAPUQFggmMAE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.migrationpolicy.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fpublications%2FTCMStatement-Identity.pdf&usg=AFQjCNFHYUNzVVK6a41r9pcGLC0_goSFww

5. Language and identity:

Language seems to have two principal functions; it is, of course, an instrument of communication, but it can also constitute a means of asserting one's identity or one's distinctiveness from others²⁶. In his conclusion on Language and Social Identity, Professor Rusi Jaspal; Professor of Psychology and Sexual Health at De Montfort University stated that:

“It has been argued that language can constitute an important marker of social identity at various levels of human interdependence, e.g. subcultural or national. It is noteworthy that languages are not inherently ‘good’ or ‘bad’; value and meaning are conferred upon languages by people, which in turn gives rise to pervasive social representations. People may or may not act in accordance with these representations; for instance, if a group or its language evokes negative social representations, a member of the social or linguistic group may seek social mobility through membership in a more positively evaluated group. The boundaries of linguistic identity are of course permeable; an individual may choose to leave their original group and gain membership of another by adopting a new language.”²⁷

Identity processes may explain both group-based and individual-based decisions to adopt or to reject languages; the overarching search for a positive social identity seems to underlie these decisions. Cultural groups and subcultures use language as a badge of membership, and nations brandish their standardized language as the emblem of their distinctiveness from other nations, even if the language only has a ‘symbolic’ role. Clearly, these issues merit further academic

²⁶ Language and Social Identity: A Psychosocial Approach, accessed on June 03, 2016, <https://www.dora.dmu.ac.uk/handle/2086/8809>

²⁷ Rusi Jaspal, *Language and social identity: a psychosocial approach*, *Psychtalk* 64, 2009, 19.

attention both at the individual and social levels; social psychology is fully equipped to address this complex area of study.

Immigrant cultures on the other hand are not static; they change, they create languages and find artistic ways of expression in the course of adjusting to new environments such as in autobiographies, novels, poetry, films. In short, immigrant literature and art are excellent sources of information on the subjective experience of cultural identity. How and through which methods can these sources be studied and used constructively? We wished furthermore to investigate the current research and need for future research in the following linguistic topics: the appropriation of language; changes in the language of origin; the production of “immigrant languages”; the mechanisms of external borrowing (from a language source to a language contact) in linguistic change; the impact of the linguistic productions of immigrants on the language of the host countries.²⁸

6. Diversity in the American Society :

The American society was always known for the diversity of its population, even in the colonial era it was one of its distinguishing characteristic. By European standards, America was extraordinarily diverse ethnically, religiously, and regionally.

The first federal census, conducted in 1790, found that a fifth of the entire population was African American. Among whites, three-fifths were English in ancestry and another fifth was Scottish or Irish. The remainder was of Dutch, French, German, Swedish, or some other

²⁸ Gretty M. Mirdal and Lea Ryynänen-Karjalainen, *Migration and Transcultural Identities* (European Science Foundation, 2004), 4-5.

background²⁹. So it can be said that the US has been international at its own creation, from an early modern American history point of view. This view rethinks American history in a global age without leaving aside the fact of its internationality at the beginning of its creation. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the 2015 population in America was: 74% White, 13% African American, 5% Asian, 4% Hispanic origin (may be of any race), 2% Two or more races, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 0.2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.³⁰

Each race represents a different ethnic group; an ethnic group refers to people who are closely related to each other through characteristics such as culture, language, and religion. The United State is the host of many ethnic groups due to the high degree of immigration that it knows, and in turn each of these groups contributes to the American cultural heritage.

Culture is the shaping stone of every individual; it defines the identity and behavior, our way of living goes according to which culture we belong, it refers to the shared language, beliefs, values, norms, and behaviors.

7. Diaspora:

Diaspora has come to refer particularly to historical mass dispersions of an involuntary nature, such as the expulsion of Jews from Judea, the fleeing of Greeks after the fall of Constantinople, the African Trans-Atlantic slave trade, the southern Chinese or Hindus of South Asia during the coolie trade, the Irish during and after the Irish Famine, the displacement of Palestinians in the

²⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 ACS, *Migration Policy Institute (MPI)*, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0081/twps0081.html>, accessed on June 28, 2016.

³⁰ Ibid.

20th century and the exile and deportation of Circassians. However Diaspora in general represents the spreading of people from one original country to other countries.³¹

In the literature from the early 1990s onwards, transnationalism³² has been linked to the concepts of diaspora and migration although they represent discrete processes and sets of phenomena. The impressive amount of literature on both transnationalism and diaspora implies an overwhelming interest in the topic, which is nowadays often considered as a new phenomenon related to globalization. Steven Vertovec³³ Director of the Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen and Honorary Joint Professor of Sociology and Ethnology, University of Göttingen, illustrated these variations by defining migration as physical movement, resettlement and re-establishment of key social institutions; diaspora as the consciousness of being connected to the people and traditions of a homeland and to migrants of the same origin in their countries; and transnationalism as the practices of exchange of resources, including people, across the borders of nation states. This implies that migration can occur without diaspora and transnationalism, but the two last-mentioned activities are always a result of migration.³⁴

8. Dual Citizenship and Daily Life:

One of the principal concerns related to multiple citizenships is how immigrants deal with this in their daily life and what its effects for their identity/identities are. The basis of the discussion is the change of attitudes of Western states towards dual or multiple citizenships and how these changes are interpreted.

³¹ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diaspora>, accessed on July 05, 2016.

³² Transnationalism means going beyond national boundaries or interests

(<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/transnational>, accessed on September on 15, 2016)

³³ Steven Vertovec, "Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1999): 39-42.

³⁴ Gretty M. Mirdal and Lea Ryyänen-Karjalainen, opsit, 8-9.

Three developments have led to an increase in the number of people holding dual or multiple citizenship: First, citizenship laws have been developed towards gender equality. Second, specific categories of people have been accorded dual or multiple citizenships. Third, the former colonial powers have wanted to maintain their influence in their former colonies.

The daily life of dual citizenship can be seen in the social realities of bi-national marriages. Some of the questions dealt with in bi-national relationships and marriages can be resolved once and for all, some come back a couple of times throughout different stages of life, and some questions must be negotiated daily. It means dealing with cultural and national prescriptions and finding very pragmatic and creative solutions. This applies also to an understanding of the term “transnational”, which does not mean only border crossing but much more; it touches limits and overrunning of borders, concepts and laws. In the case of bi-national families, dual citizenship or nationality concerns not only the migrants but also non-migrants who are in a relationship with migrants, the society as a whole as well as the practices in social reality.³⁵

Conclusion:

There is no doubt that identity and migration are inextricably linked that that this linkage occupies a central place in contemporary political debates both within individual states, as well as international organizations dealing with migration and refugee issues. However, one of the most significant issues one may face dealing with the politics of migration are its effects both on the migrants and the societies of the host states, and the immigration policies of various states is the misunderstanding of or even ignorance about the contents of the concept of identity. For example, Sinisa Malesevic Professor of Sociology at the University College, Dublin, Ireland

³⁵ Ibid, 11.

argues that the term “identity”, and its derivatives, covers too much ground to be analytically useful, while its quasi-scientific use through popular appeal has a potential for devastating political outcomes³⁶. In daily practice, identity has become no more than a common name for different and distinct processes that people need to explain. Wrapping all these diverse forms of action, events, and actors under a single expression can only generate more misunderstandings.

However the concept of “collective identity” is a complex one and that is why it has been greatly misunderstood by the general public although it has served as an effective instrument in the hands of radical anti-immigrant political forces. For example, it has been shown that collective identities do not necessarily imply some kind of cultural homogeneity and coherence and that there are many elements of a “group culture” or “national culture” which are not necessarily part of collective identities³⁷.

Finally, the examination of the identity-migration nexus reveals that only an honest and continuous dialogue between hosting and migrant communities, a mutual understanding between them, and their determination to prevent or deal effectively with any extremist behavior on the part of their members would prevent migrants’ identity from becoming a security threat to the host state and society.

³⁶ Sinisa Malesevic, *Identity as Ideology: Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 35.

³⁷ Peters, Bernhard (2003), *Collective Identity, Cultural Differences and the Development Trajectories of Immigrant Groups*, in Rosemarie Sackmann, Bernhard Peters, and Thomas Faist (eds.), *Identity and Integration* (Aldershot: Ashgate), 17.

Chapter Two

MENA Diaspora in the US

Introduction:

In the first chapter we attempted to describe both identity and migration; the types of identity and first concerns that follow migration. Moreover we tried to describe their impacts on each other, how migration affects the identity of immigrants and how the identity of an individual is affected by the process of migration.

The following chapter is going to follow the adjustment of the immigrant from the MENA region into the American society, the process of their assimilation and acculturation and if the migration process had any effect on immigrant or their children; if they changed their ways of life or adapted easily in the American society.

Arab Americans represents one of the minority ethnic groups that make up the population of the United States. They trace their roots to the Arab World, which stretches from Northern Africa to Western Asia. Arab Americans live in every state of the union, in both small towns and large cities, work in a variety of fields, and have a range of educational backgrounds and political affiliations. Despite this diversity, Arab Americans have a shared sense of history, language and cultural heritage.

1. The Waves of North African and Middle East Immigrations to America:

Immigrants from the Middle East include people from the Arab Gulf States (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates), Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Yemen. However the majority of the immigrants from these countries and regions are Arabs (both Christian and Muslim) but they also include other ethnic and religious minorities, such as Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, and Kurds. The North African countries of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia are majority Arab as well and share common cultural and historical characteristics with the Arab nations of the Middle East. Arab immigration to the United States began, in tiny numbers, during the late eighteenth century and has continued into the twenty-first century. Three waves of large-scale Arab immigration can be identified.³⁸

³⁸ James Ciment and John Radzilosky, *American Immigration: An Encyclopedia of Political, Social, and Cultural Change, volume 1-4*, 2nd edition, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 773.

1.1. The First Wave (1870 -1924):

The first wave overwhelmingly came from the Ottoman province of Greater Syria (today's Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, and Syria) fleeing wars and declining economic prospects. The overwhelming majority of these immigrants, estimated at 90 percent, were Christians who adhered to the Eastern Rites of Christianity: Maronite, Melchite Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox. Although they were generally Christian, early Arab Americans maintained sectarian divisions from the Middle East. Many fewer Muslims emigrated from the same region during this period. The early immigrants did not have a clear sense of national identity and instead identified themselves by their family, religion, or native town or village.³⁹ This cultural identity was strong and important. Syrians maintained close ties with other immigrants from Greater Syria who belonged to the same religious sect, and most of their cultural and social activities in the United States centered on the church. The early wave of immigrants (mostly poor, but also some elites) left for various economic and political reasons. Many of the poorer immigrants were illiterate, unskilled, young, and unmarried peasant men who came to the United States to seek their fortune. Many did not speak English. Some returned to their native villages after saving enough money to enable them to settle down comfortably; the appearance of wealth among the young men who had left only a few years earlier encouraged others to emigrate. Although most of the immigrants were peasants, they did not usually seek agricultural work when they arrived in America.⁴⁰ In fact, many of the Arabs who arrived between 1870 and 1924 made their way as peddlers, though some also worked in factories, such as the Ford automobile plant in Detroit. Most of these immigrants initially wanted to make enough money to support their families and

³⁹Ibid, 773-774.

⁴⁰ Arab Immigrants, <http://immigrationtounitedstates.org/351-arab-immigrants.html>, accessed on February 16, 2016

settle comfortably back home. Census records indicate that before World War I, about 25 percent of the Arabs who came to the United States returned home. But after World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, many came to call America home. In 1920, the United States was home to at least 50,000 immigrants from this region. Arrivals were largely uneducated and mostly employed in low-skill occupations. The Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924, which established general immigration quotas and restricted all immigration from Asia, effectively ended this wave.⁴¹

1.2. The Second Wave (1948 to 1965):

The second wave was triggered by political unrest in the MENA region, including the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and revolutions in Egypt and Iraq in the 1950s. Partly as a result of the restrictive U.S. quota system, immigrants who arrived during this period were highly educated elites from countries such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. This wave of immigrants, who were to a significant degree Palestinian and Muslim, came because of political upheavals in their homelands. Whether it was the establishment of the state of Israel, which displaced 750,000 Palestinians, or the political turmoil in the newly created Arab states of Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia, most immigrants came to the United States after 1948 because the political upheaval in their own countries made it difficult for them to continue their lives there.⁴² This wave of immigration would begin the drain of young and educated Arab professionals from the Middle East to the West. These immigrants were highly educated and skilled and came with more resources compared to their predecessors. Their level of education allowed them to acculturate to American society more easily and to attain positions in

⁴¹ James Ciment and John Radzilosky, *opsit*, 773-774

⁴² Arab Immigrants, <http://immigrationtounitedstates.org/351-arab-immigrants.html>, accessed on February 16, 2016

professions from medicine to business. At the same time, they were influenced by the politics in the Middle East and were devoted to cultural and religious preservation among their own immigrant population.⁴³

1.3. The Third Wave (1967 -2000):

The removal of the quota system with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 opened the door to the third wave (a mix of people seeking to reunite with their family, education and employment opportunities, and safety from war and persecution). Post-1965 MENA immigrants had a similar level of education to those in the second wave, but were far more numerous. And a much higher percentage was Muslim. The majority of the third-wave immigrants came to the United States to settle and had no wish to return. Many have become educated or achieved economic prosperity and have become active social and political participants in their new society. These immigrants have been instrumental in community building and establishing Arab (both Muslim and Christian) organizations.⁴⁴ The building of most of the major mosques throughout the United States can be attributed to these immigrants and their focus on religious preservation. In contrast to the first wave of immigrants who wanted to assimilate and did so easily because they were Christians, the second and third waves were largely Muslim and related little to the first generation of Arab immigrants. As a migrant group, Arab Americans retain certain characteristics that set them apart from the rest of the U.S. population. Arab Americans tend to be younger than other ethnic groups. On the whole, they have a higher level of education: more than 80 percent of adults ages twenty-five and older in the early 2000's had attained a high

⁴³ James Ciment and John Radzilosky, *opsit*, 774-775

⁴⁴ Migration policy, accessed on April 19, 2016, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/middle-eastern-and-north-african-immigrants-united-states#Language> Diversity and English Prof

school diploma, and more than one-third held a bachelor's degree or higher. Many of the immigrants in the second wave came for the purpose of higher education and remained to work and live in the United States. As a result of their education, they tend to earn higher than the median income for other Americans. The tradition of self-employment remains strong among Arab Americans, especially in retail and professional services. Compared with immigrants from other ethnic groups, they prefer to settle in urban areas, with more than 90 percent of Arab Americans residing in such locations.⁴⁵ Between 1980 and 2010, the size of the MENA immigrant population increased four-fold, from 223,000 to 861,000; and between 2010 and 2013 increased a further 18 percent, to 1,017,000.⁴⁶

The current MENA immigrant population in the United States is very diverse: approximately 70 percent come from the Middle East, the remainder from North Africa. Iraq is the largest country of origin, followed closely by Egypt and Lebanon. The number of immigrants from Saudi Arabia and Yemen has also grown rapidly over the past decade. There was no noticeable increase in the number of Syrians entering the United States as refugees between 2011 and 2013 as the Syrian civil war intensified, most likely due to the lag in time between application and approval for resettlement. However, there was a marked uptick in Syrians granted asylum in the United States, from 60 in 2011 to 364 in 2012 and 811 in 2013. Most Syrians who have fled their war-torn country reside in camps in neighboring countries, many waiting to be resettled.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid, 775-776.

⁴⁶ Data from U.S. Census Bureau 2006, 2010, and 2013 American Community Surveys (ACS), and Campbell J. Gibson and Kay Jung, *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1850-2000* (Working Paper no. 81, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, February 2006). <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0081/twps0081.html>, Avril 03, 2016

⁴⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 ACS, *Migration Policy Institute (MPI)*, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0081/twps0081.html>, Avril 03, 2016

2. Immigration Pathways and Naturalization :

Research proved that immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa were more likely than the total foreign-born population to be naturalized citizens. In 2013, 57 percent of the 1 million MENA immigrants residing in the United States were naturalized U.S. citizens, compared to 47 percent of all immigrants.⁴⁸The most common pathway to legal permanent residence (LPR) for immigrants from the MENA region was as immediate relatives of U.S. citizens.

Although petitioning as immediate relatives of U.S. a citizen was the primary pathway for MENA immigrants in 2013, the immigration pattern varied by country. For instance, 71 percent of Iraqi immigrants and 49 percent of Sudanese immigrants became LPRs as refugees and asylees, while 51 percent of Algerian immigrants gained green cards through the Diversity Visa lottery. Thirty-five percent of UAE immigrants became permanent residents via employment-based preferences, and 30 percent of Jordanian immigrants through family-sponsored preferences.⁴⁹

So we can conclude that the Middle Eastern and North African diaspora population in the United States is comprised of approximately 2.03 million individuals who were either born in the MENA region or reported MENA ancestry, according to tabulations from the U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

As an important note the site web migration policy stated that,

There is no universally recognized definition of the term "diaspora." Most often, the term includes individuals who self-identify as having ancestral ties to a specific country of origin. The MENA diaspora in the United States includes all individuals who were born in a MENA country or who selected at least one of the following responses on the two ACS questions about ancestry: Algerian, Arab, Arabic, Assyrian, Bahraini, Chaldean, Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Kuwaiti, Lebanese, Libyan, Middle Eastern, Moroccan, North African, Omani, Other Arab, Qatari, Saudi Arabian, South Yemeni, Syrian, Tunisian, United Arab Emirates, or Yemeni.⁵⁰

3. Religion :

Christians comprise the majority of Arab Americans nationally (over 60%). The Muslim part is fast growing however, and in some areas, Muslims constitute the greater majority of Arab Americans. Arab Muslims are nominally divided between Sunni and Shiite (*Shia*); the majority of Arab American Muslims are Sunni.

Early Arab Christian immigrants, as well as Muslims, first practiced their religion in the privacy of their homes or in public spaces used for other purposes. Some Christians worshiped in churches close to their homes. As the communities grew and became more affluent, they built their own churches.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Migration policy, accessed on April 19, 2016, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/middle-eastern-and-north-african-immigrants-united-states#Language> Diversity and English Prof

⁵¹ Arab Americans, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Americans, Accessed on May 23, 2016

The biggest change Muslims make in adapting Islamic practice to life in the United States is the inability to do the Friday prayer. For decades, Arab American Muslims have resigned themselves to the fact that, because of job and school obligations, they would not be able to observe Friday communal prayers, or *jumaa*. Arab American Muslims also had to do without some of the five daily prayers practicing Muslims are obligated to perform because of a lack of facilities and support from mainstream institutions. Technically, Muslims can pray at work or school if the employer or school authorities provide a place. Increasing numbers of devout Muslims insist on meeting their ritual obligations while on the job.

Religious disputes tend to be confined largely to competition between groups *within* the same group rather than between groups. Thus, for example, in Dearborn, Michigan, which has a large population of Lebanese Shiites, competition is rife among various Shiite mosques and religious centers for followers from the Shiite community. Sunnis in the area generally belong to Sunni congregations, and are not viewed as potential recruits by the Shiites. Similarly, Arab Christian denominations tend to remain insular and eschew open rivalry with other denominations.⁵²

4. Acculturation and Assimilation:

Acculturation is a cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture it also refers to a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact⁵³.

Assimilation on the other hand means

⁵² Arab Americans, Accessed on June 03, 2016, <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/A-Br/Arab-Americans.html>

⁵³ Acculturation, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/acculturation>. Accessed on June 20, 2016.

the process of adapting or adjusting to the culture of a group or nation⁵⁴. The title purpose is to show us each wave of immigrants adapted to the American society.

4.1. The First Wave (1870-1924):

The first wave of Arab immigrants to the United States assimilated easily into American society, this eased by the fact that the majority were Christian. These immigrants fled the rule of the Ottoman Turkish Empire and Arab and regional national consciousness was still nascent at the time so aside from difficulties in pronouncing Arabic names beneath anglicized surnames, they retained few traces of their ethnic roots.

An article in the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1881 describes a typical Arab immigrant family.

The father of the family who came to the United States three years earlier in 1878 is said to have “...many characteristics of his race. He still adheres to the dress of his native country.....and is not able to converse fluently in English”⁵⁵. His sons on the other hand already had mastered English very well, and are very successful in American society. One of the immigrant’s sons is practicing medicine, another is a physician and yet another is a college teacher. The sons, despite being integrated fairly well into American society, display a great interest in the political situation of the region they came from.

An article in 1899 mentions how a group of young Arab immigrants from Ottoman greater Syria formed a revolutionary group called ‘Young Syria’. This group organized a mass meeting in

⁵⁴ Assimilation, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/assimilation>, accessed on June 20,2016

⁵⁵ *New York Daily Tribune*, June 20 1881, *Syrians in America. Experience of the family of Yusif Arbeely* in Beverlee Turner Mehdi (ed.), *The Arabs in America 1492-1977. A chronology and fact book* (New York 1978), 70-71.

New York where they urged Arab Americans to "...write and to arm themselves against the Turkish government."⁵⁶

The swiftness, by which the first few Arab generations assimilated in American society, can be demonstrated with the case study by Abdu Elkholy a sociologist at Northern Illinois in 1966, of a first generation Arab immigrant.⁵⁷ Incidentally, the subject of the case study is one of the few Muslim immigrants of the period. This particular immigrant came to the United States from Lebanon or Syria as it was then called in 1902 when he was 25 years of age. Elkholy interviewed the subject in 1959. The subject states his reasons for leaving his homeland as both political and economic, however Elkholy comments that the main reason for emigration was '...the economic misery in his country'. Upon arriving in New York, the Muslim immigrant contacted some Syrian Christians and followed their occupational pattern of peddling. After a short while the subject settled himself in the Christian Syrian community in Detroit, where he was employed in unskilled labor. In 1905 he was informed that some relatives had arrived, and he immediately paid them a visit. He returned from that visit with a 15 year old wife, with whom he eventually had six children, three sons and three daughters. These children were never brought up in an Islamic tradition because the immigrant did not intend to stay in the United States permanently. Hence the children would 'very soon learn about their religion back home in Syria'. Two of his sons and one daughter married Americans when they grew up, his two other daughters married Spanish and Italian men. Many of the subject's grandchildren married Americans as well and drifted away from any religious ties they had. The first numbers of generations of Arab Americans were fairly remarkable in that they assimilated and integrated very well into American society, and simultaneously maintained strong emotional and cultural ties with their

⁵⁶ Arab American Identity: From Unity to Division, <http://www.zihniozdil.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Arab-American-Identity.pdf>. Accessed on August 26, 2016.

⁵⁷ Abdo Elkholy, 'Case history of a first generation immigrant in Detroit', in Beverlee Turner Mehdi (ed.), *The Arabs in America 1492-1977. A chronology and fact book* (New York 1978) 76.

region of origin. As the generations progressed the ties with the homeland steadily declined. As a result of the general economic ambition of the early Arab Americans, they imitated the middle-class course of the non-Arab Americans rather early⁵⁸. By 1940 most Arab Americans, barring the first generation immigrants, were Americanized in many ways. The traditional patriarchal extended family had broken down into nuclear units. Participation of wives in the family business weakened the paternal authority. Working wives adjusted their domestic roles by having fewer children and cooking fewer time-consuming meals. Covering the head, which was a custom to both Christian and Muslim women in the homeland, was soon abandoned. Even the segregation of sexes at social gatherings and in churches disappeared⁵⁹.

4.2 The Second Wave (1948-1965):

By the time the second wave immigrants arrived in mid-century, the Arab world was in the process of shaking off the European colonial rule that had carved up much of the Middle East after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. In the 1950s and 1960s the Arab countries were overflowed with nationalist ideologies, and the Arab world was filled with promise and hope, especially regarding the question of Palestine and Arab national unity (two of the burning issues of the day). These ideological currents profoundly influenced many second-wave immigrants. The second wave of Arab immigrants was able to assimilate into mainstream society without much resistance. This wave tended to retain some distinctive features of its ethnic past because many of the newcomers were Muslim, contributing to the retention of a distinct cultural identity. The establishment of cultural clubs, political committees, and Arabic

⁵⁸ Alixa Naff, *The Arab Americans*, (Chelsea, Paperback, 1998), 18.

⁵⁹ Arab American Identity: From Unity to Division, <http://www.zihniozdil.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Arab-American-Identity.pdf>. Accessed on August 26, 2016.

language schools helped maintain a cultural identity and a political awareness among many new arrivals and their children.⁶⁰

Until the 1960s assimilated Arab Americans had little connection with recent Arab immigrants. Both groups lived as virtual strangers⁶¹. But in the 1960s many of these Americanized Arabs started to adopt Arab nationalism as their political outlook. There are different views on the reasons for this. A reaction to anti-Arab bias, which grew in the United States during the Arab-Israeli conflicts, could be an explanation. Yossi Shain Professor of Comparative Government and Diaspora Politics at Georgetown University in fact states that the Palestinian cause provided “the very foundation for pan-Arab ethnic identity in the United States”⁶². Alixa Naff (1919/ 2013) Lebanese-born American historian mentioned “watching Arabs suffer ridicule and condemnation in the American media and in Congress” as a cause for the assumption of an ethnic identity by Arab Americans⁶³.

Although the American Arabic Association was the first Arab organization in the United States on a nationwide level in 1960, distinct institutions with a lucid pro-Arab American political agenda were established from 1967. The 1967 Arab-Israeli War⁶⁴ and the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) coincided with this process. Therefore the claim by Shain that “prior to 1967, Arab Americans had no ideological core, national political organizations, or funding”⁶⁵, while it is rather exaggerating, holds some merit.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Alixa Naff, *opsit*, 89.

⁶² Yossi Shain, ‘*Arab-Americans at a crossroads*’, in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25/3 (1996), 46.

⁶³ Alixa Naff, *opsit*, 90.

⁶⁴ The 1967 Arab-Israeli lasted for Six days from June 5 to June 11. Accessed on July 23, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/arab-israeli-war-1967>.

⁶⁵ Yossi Shain, *opsit*, 47.

⁶⁶ Arab American Identity: From Unity to Division, <http://www.zihniozdil.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Arab-American-Identity.pdf>. Accessed on August 26, 2016.

4.3 The Third Wave (1967-2000):

Arriving in the 1970s and 1980s, the third wave of Arab immigrants received a negative reception from the host society due to the media's vilification of Arabs following the events of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and Arab Oil Embargo⁶⁷. So instead of assimilating, this new wave of immigrants often opted to remain on the edge of society, even while adopting many American cultural habits. The third wave has been the driving force behind the recent upsurge in the establishment of Muslim schools, mosques, charities, and Arabic language classes.

The Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG), was founded in 1967 after the Arab-Israeli war, it was mostly composed of academics and professionals. The AAUG had many supporters among American adherents of third world movements. According to Shain the AAUG was an isolationist group which did not try to establish itself as an American organization and "was largely perceived 'as a foreign voice in America'and regarded the United States as a captive of the Zionist⁶⁸ bias"⁶⁹. Helen Samhan Associate Professor of Philosophy and expert in late Aristotelian and Early Modern Philosophy and Science on the other hand finds that the

⁶⁷ The 1967 Oil Embargo began on June 6, 1967, the second day of the Six-Day War, with a joint Arab decision to deter any countries from supporting Israel militarily. Several Middle Eastern countries eventually limited their oil shipments, some embargoing only the United States and the United Kingdom, while others placed a total ban on oil exports. Accessed on August 26, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967_Oil_Embargo.

⁶⁸ Zionism is a nationalist political movement of Jews and Jewish culture that supports the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland in the territory defined as the historic Land of Israel (roughly corresponding to Palestine, Canaan or the Holy Land), accessed on August 26, 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zionism>.

⁶⁹ Yossi Shain, *opsit*, 50.

monitoring of AAUG was an example of how growing anti-Arab sentiments led to the stigmatization of Arab American activists⁷⁰.

One of the major factors was the Civil Rights Movement, and other emancipation movements of the 1960s. These laid the foundations for changing social attitudes about diversity in American culture. Consequently there was a rise of minority consciousness among the Arab Americans. The establishment of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) in 1980 was within the ideology of minority consciousness. This institution was founded by Senator James Abourezk. The ADC files lawsuits in cases of discrimination against Arab Americans by the government, companies and organizations.⁷¹

The type of Arab Americans who choose to deny their ethnic background cover the spectrum: recent arrivals, assimilated immigrants, and native-born. Among the American-born, denial takes the form of a complete break with one's ethnicity in favor of wholesale adoption of American culture. Others, particularly immigrants, tend to stress their distinctiveness from Arab and Islamic culture, as when Iraqi Christians stress their Chaldean identity as opposed to their Iraqi affiliation. Arab Americans who choose to withdraw into an ethnic enclave tend to be recent immigrants. Running the gamut from unskilled workers to middle-class professionals, this group prefers to live in ethnic neighborhoods, or close to other members of the same group in the suburbs. They believe that their ethnic culture and religious traditions are alien to American

⁷⁰ Helen Hattab Samhan, 'Politics and exclusion: The Arab American experience', in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16/2 (1987) 16-17.

⁷¹ Arab American Identity: From Unity to Division, <http://www.zihniozdil.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Arab-American-Identity.pdf>. Accessed on August 26, 2016.

culture, and hence need to minimize assimilation. Cultural marginalization is the price of living in American society.⁷²

Those who advocate engaging society head-on seek to win societal acceptance of Arab Americans as an integral part of America's cultural plurality. The integrationists adopt several strategies. Some ties. They also focus on the commonalities between Christianity and Islam. Others seek to confront anti-Arab stereotyping and racism by emphasizing that they are Americans who happen to be of Arab stress the common bonds between Arab or Islamic values and American values, emphasizing strong family ancestry. Along with well-assimilated, native-born Arab Americans, this group also consists of foreign-born professionals who wish to maintain their ethnic identity free from stigmatization by the wider culture.⁷³

Foremost among the key issues facing the Arab American community is dealing with the rising numbers of new immigrants. The current stream of Arab immigrants is expected to increase as political instability and civil conflict within various Arab countries grows.

5. Arabs Relationship with Americans:

Relations between the MENA immigrants and their host society have been mixed. Early immigrants went mostly unnoticed by the American population. They tended to settle in areas with a high level of economy, which drew similar immigrants. The pattern carried over after the World War II to the second wave of Arab immigration.

⁷² Arab Americans, Accessed on June 03, 2016, <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/A-Br/Arab-Americans.html>

⁷³ Ibid.

Relations, however, saw a turn to the worst for members of the third wave and for native-born Arab Americans after the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War. This situation worsened further after the Arab oil embargo and the quadrupling of world oil prices that followed in the wake of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Arabs and Muslims were vilified as bloodthirsty terrorists, greedy oil sheiks, and religious fanatics by the mass media, politicians, and political commentators. With the fall of the Shah⁷⁴ and the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini⁷⁵ to power in Iran in 1979 came another oil shortage and price shock that further exacerbated anti-Middle Eastern sentiment in the United States.⁷⁶

The mid-1980s were the peak of anti-Arab hate crimes. In comparison, the Gulf crisis of 1991-1992 was relatively less lethal. Although there were many reports of assaults against Arab Americans, few incidents resulted in serious injuries and no one was killed. No Arab or Islamic community organizations were bombed, though many received threats and an incendiary device that apparently failed to explode was discovered at the American Muslim Council in San Diego. A few incidents during this period can be traced to the assassination in November 1990 of Rabbi Meir Kahane, the former leader of the Jewish Defense League. His murder triggered a rash of death threats and harassment against prominent Arab Americans.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Shah is a title given to the emperors, kings and lords of Iran (historically also known as Persia).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shah>. August 31, 2016.

⁷⁵ Ayatollah Khomeini became the supreme religious leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, following many years of resistance to Shah Pahlavi. Following his appointment as Ayatollah, Khomeini worked to remove the Shah from power for his associations with the West. Upon the success of the revolution Ayatollah Khomeini was named religious and political leader of Iran for life.

<http://www.biography.com/people/ayatollah-ruhollah-khomeini-13680544>. August 31, 2016.

⁷⁶ Arab Americans, Accessed on June 03, 2016, <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/A-Br/Arab-Americans.html>

⁷⁷ ibid

Collectively many Arab Americans have experienced cultural marginalization. Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners generally have been vilified in the news media, in Hollywood productions, in pulp novels, and in political discourse. Arab Americans cope with their marginality in one of three different ways: denying their ethnic identity; withdrawing into an ethnic enclave; or engaging mainstream society through information campaigns aimed at the news media, book publishers, politicians, and schools. The theme of these campaigns centers on the inherent unfairness of, and pitfalls in, stereotyping Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners. In 2000, the cable television network TNT announced that it would never again show movies that blatantly bash Arabs and Arab Americans. Such films included *Shadow Warriors 2: Assault on Death Mountain* and *Thunder in Paradise*.⁷⁸

Conclusion:

Arab Americans have been an integral part of American society since its inception. They come from 22 Arab countries located in both Asia and Africa. Like other immigrants, Arab Americans came to seek a better life for themselves and their children.

Today, with a population estimated at 4.2 million, Arab Americans are an extremely diverse group of people. They are found in every state, and in small and large cities. They are Christians and Muslims, and are found in every profession imaginable, ranging from the white-collar professional to the daily laborer.

⁷⁸ Ibid

Despite this diversity, Arab Americans feel connected through common values and cultural heritage which give them their shared identity. Arab Americans continue to value extended family and respect of elders, as well as education, family businesses, generosity and hospitality. To stay connected, and to serve their fellow community members, Arab Americans built their own political, cultural and social service organizations. These organizations have continued to help new immigrants adjust to new society, fight against discrimination, and promote the involvement of Arab Americans in the political process. Some are simply cultural organizations that help Arab Americans maintain their culture and stay connected.

General Conclusion

While multiculturalism remains an ongoing and a constant social reality, many view multiculturalism as the cause of death of what is known as culture and identity. This phenomenon is particularly present in countries with a high level of immigration such as the United States of America which is known for its great immigrations' level and the its vast diversity.

Identity has always been the subject of many questions and a great number of experts have tried to interpret it and its effects on the individual on a personal level and society on a general one. On the same page migration was always part of the human life; as people always reach to better their life and seldom hesitate in moving to another land in the pursuit of this goal. The first chapter described these two terms; their types and effects on each other.

Identity and migration have always had a complex relationship, and are now more than ever the subject of controversy and the many laws that have been passed in the different countries of the world are the obvious political response to the ever increasing levels of immigration and its impact on the individual and the society. Individuals when they travel from one land to another, from one culture to another are bound to come across some difficulties as they try to acculturate and assimilate in their new societies, but immigration doesn't only affect the individual but also affects the society as when these immigrants attempt to integrate in their new societies they also incorporate their own culture into their host ones.

Arabs American have always been part of the American society, be it on the front line or as mere shadows on the back, their presence cannot be ignored. The second chapter treated the arrival of these Arabs; from the first waves in the 1880's to these days. But its main topic was the ways of integration, how some integrated easily in the case of the first wave to the difficult times that the third wave faced in their adaptation to the American society.

Researches prove that the first large waves who came to the US had little to no problems assimilating to their new society. However the restricting laws toward immigration and the rising conflicts between the MENA region and the rest of the world proved to be a great hindrance to the following generations. The third wave of Arabs who came to the US saw themselves under great prejudices and discrimination which made their adaptation and integration highly difficult.

Through the different researches done on the subjects of Arabs in America or how they came to be known Arabs Americans we can say that the adaptation to the American society though difficult sometimes was successful in an all; as Arabs managed to prosperously adapt to acculturate themselves in the American society; be it by somehow leaving behind some of their previous rituals and beliefs and adapting to the American ones or by creating their own communities in the larger American society.

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