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THE SPACES OF ENCOUNTER OF FEMALE MIDDLE EASTERN AND MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA

by

TARA D. PRIZITO

Under the Direction of Dr. Dona J. Stewart

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes identity, class, religiosity, and belonging as they affect the experiences of female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants in various spaces within the context of the Atlanta, Georgia area and draws attention to the 'othering' of immigrants in American society. The exploration of immigrants' experiences in various spaces includes public and semi-public, employment, educational and organizational spaces. Interviews were conducted on 24 female immigrants in the Atlanta area who possess various backgrounds. While female immigrants who wear the *hijab* experienced more, and more direct, discrimination than those who wear Western styles, the women who wear *hijab* were not discouraged from attempting to participate in the host society. Female immigrants who wear Western style attire reported indirect negative experiences in public and semi-public spaces. Immigrants' experiences underscore the concept

that socially acceptable stereotypes in the media become fodder for negative stereotypes in mainstream American society.

INDEX WORDS: Muslim discrimination, Middle Eastern women, Muslim women, Immigration, Public space, Fear

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by

TARA D. PRIZITO

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2009

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by

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# INTRODUCTION

My interest in Middle Eastern culture began in 1997, when I decided to take a Middle Eastern dance class, more popularly known as belly dance, at Georgia State University just for the fun of it. Falling immediately in love with the dance, as well as the music, I decided to pursue a career as a professional belly dancer, dancing in local Middle Eastern restaurants as well as festivals and special occasion parties, where I began to develop a fondness for Middle Eastern food and Arabic language as well! I was on my way to becoming very interested in Middle Eastern culture - then 9/11 happened.

During my career, I had come to know members of the local Middle Eastern community, finding most of them to be gracious people, simply trying to provide good lives for their families. Yet the qualities of many of the people that I had come to know were so different from those negative qualities attributed to Middle Easterners and Muslims by the media and American society after 9/11. At this time even I, a white American, was concerned for my safety in the Middle Eastern restaurants that I was entertaining in due to the news reports of Middle Easterners, Muslims, and those who resemble them being attacked, and their businesses, homes, and property vandalized. While my fears began to subside several weeks after 9/11, I wondered about the people who must live with this fear on a daily basis, simply because of their attire, accent, or skin color. Curiosity about the disparity between the Middle Easterners and Muslims that I knew and those who were demonized by the media and American society eventually led me to pursue further studies.

Since Middle Eastern Americans are among the fastest growing ethnic populations in U.S. urban areas today, a basic understanding of Middle Eastern and Muslim culture is greatly

needed. Abed (2007) argues that we must work tirelessly to understand and to learn from others and that "we must learn to respect and value all aspects of the diversity within ourselves and within others". Abed (2007), goes on to say "A productive dialogue with a new culture can start if, and only if, we overcome the notion that our original nationality, our religious beliefs, and our racial and ethnic affiliations are the only things that can define us as individuals and groups". To this end, the purpose of this research is twofold. Firstly, an attempt is made to capture the voices and perceptions of female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants in the Atlanta, Georgia area. Secondly, this research may be referenced by newcomers of Middle Eastern and/or Islamic origins in order to gain knowledge as to which spaces they can expect to travel about with minimal discrimination in the Atlanta, Georgia area, and which spaces they may wish to avoid due to other immigrants' negative experiences in those spaces. While many new immigrants will have connections to the 'community', which will suggest where and where not to go, this research can provide additional support.

This research asks "What are the experiences of female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants in various spaces in the Atlanta, Georgia area? Are there non-domestic spaces in the Atlanta area that female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants are uncomfortable visiting due to safety and/or psychological concerns"? The junctures of ethnic identity, class, religiosity and various spaces are examined within the context of the Atlanta, Georgia area and attention is drawn to the 'othering' of immigrants in American society in an attempt to explain how these factors play a role in the experiences and perceptions of female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants. Concepts such as cultural conflict, alienation, assimilation, and discrimination are discussed in an attempt to understand the experiences of female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants in various spaces of the Atlanta area.

The analysis of female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants' experiences in various spaces includes public and semi-public, employment, educational and organizational spaces. While it is not possible to interview all female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants in the Atlanta, Georgia area, this study examines the experiences of 24 female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants in the Atlanta area. Research participants possess various backgrounds including religion, socioeconomic status, country of origin, and purpose for migration. Semi structured interviews were conducted on individuals and several small groups between July and September 2008. Interviews focused on attire, research participants' negative experiences in various spaces, experiences in work and educational spaces, frequently visited places and favorite local places. Respondents were asked solely to discuss negative experiences that they perceived as being directly related to their attire, race, ethnicity, and religiosity. For example, this study does not take into account bad service in a restaurant that the participant believed was due to poor management.

Previous studies on the experiences of female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants in various spaces in Western society focus on Muslim women who wear the *hijab* (Islamic head cover and modest dress for women) and the more extreme forms of discrimination they experienced, as well as various ethnic spaces that female immigrants may take refuge in. This thesis goes beyond examining only the explicit discrimination faced by women who wear the *hijab*; looking at Muslim and non-Muslim, veiled and non-veiled women in the context of the Atlanta area, and analyzing the direct as well as the indirect discrimination faced by these groups in a variety of spaces, including public, educational, and work spaces.

Chapter one explores the literature of migration theory and U.S. migration history, contemporary Middle Eastern/Muslim immigration experiences, public spaces, women in public

spaces, and finally examines the experiences of Middle Eastern/Muslim immigrants in various spaces. Chapter two discusses the importance of the project, establishes the methodological framework that guided data collection, and gives a brief overview of Atlanta's Middle Eastern and Muslim Communities as well as the research participants. Chapter three presents the demographic profile of the research participants in greater detail as well as the findings as they relate to the questions discussed in Chapter two. Chapter four discusses the body of data, illustrates the interpretations and analyses of the findings. The conclusion solidifies the connection between the purpose of the study, current literature, and interpretation and importance of the study.

# CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

While Middle Easterners living in the U.S. have been hidden under the Caucasian label[1], and Middle Easterners and Muslims alike have been historically ignored in the U.S., since 9/11 Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans are no longer invisible (Cainkar, 2002). Whether traveling, driving, working, walking through their neighborhoods or sitting in their homes, Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans are now subject to special scrutiny in American society. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 fuelled anti-Islamic and anti-Middle Eastern sentiments in the U.S., reported in and reproduced by the media, which has had the effect of arousing more open racism against Muslim and Middle Eastern migrants (McAuliffe, 2007). Consequently, the violence, discrimination, defamation and intolerance faced by Middle Easterners and Muslims in American society shortly after 9/11 was at its highest levels in their over 100-year history in the U.S. (Cainkar, 2002). Although the level of discrimination and hate crimes against Middle Easterners and Muslims has greatly decreased since the months following 9/11, immigrants of Middle Eastern and Muslim origins must continue to contend with Americans' lingering resentments and suspicions.

Elkassabani (2005) argues that, since 9/11, Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants have had a wide range of emotions including the desire to merge with American society while at the same time fearing rejection by that society, fear of being targeted for hate crimes in the U.S., and anger at being labeled terrorists. In response, some Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants have

[1]The 2000 Census was the first census to report Arab ancestry. Previous censuses reported Arabs and others from the Middle East as 'caucasian'.

embraced their culture and religion, while others have moved in the direction of assimilation with American society.

## Migration Theory

### *Reasons for Migrating*

In understanding why the U.S. has such a large immigrant population, including Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants, the first thing which needs to be clear is that not everyone migrates for the same reasons. The reason a person migrates can have an immense impact on the experiences that the immigrant has in the host country. This section discusses some of the social and economic factors that enter into migration decisions, outcomes, and experiences. A few words used to describe some of the major factors in migration are 'push', 'pull', and 'means'. 'Push' refers to those forces existing in the place of origin that encourage or force persons to emigrate. These forces may be catastrophic, political, or most often economic pressures of one kind or another. One of the most tragic push forces is conflict migration, where population movements are stimulated by violent conflicts and political upheavals in the home society (Brettell, 2000). Refugees, those who leave their home involuntarily, fall into this migration category. 'Pull' refers to those attractive forces emanating from the destination country that draws migrants (Daniels, 2002). While most pull forces are economic, some non-economic pull forces include promises of political and/or religious freedom, climate, and freedom from military service (Daniels, 2002). Some pull migrants only wish to come to the U.S. in order to work and save money, believing that they will return home to have a better life there once enough money is saved up. Sometimes this goal is achieved, however, sometimes the migrant ends up staying in

the U.S. permanently. 'Means' is one's ability to migrate, including the availability of affordable transportation, the lack of restraints on mobility in the place of origin, and the absence of effective barriers at the destination (Daniels, 2002).

While male immigrants commonly emigrate autonomously for study or work, or to precede a family emigration, most female immigrants, no matter where they are from, emigrate to the U.S. as the wives, daughters, or sisters of men (Cainkar, 1994). Relatively few emigrate autonomously, resulting in a different kind of immigration experience for women than that experienced by men (Cainkar, 1994). In traditional economic theories of migration, migrants are viewed as free from social constraints, free to move about, and free to pursue labor market activities. However, recent contributions from feminist migration scholars question the assumption of individual freedom, especially focusing on patriarchy, which may essentially constrain mobility of women (Freeman, 2005). Therefore, self determination may not be an option for women regarding how they will interact with their new host society. Cainkar (1994) argues that the attachment of female immigrants to families, a patriarchal practice, allows the family to continue exercising traditional patriarchal notions about women after immigration. On the other hand, female immigrants now have more opportunities awaiting them in the larger cities in the U.S. This is because, as Boyle et al. (1998) argues, migration is becoming feminized due to the global market offering greater employment opportunities to women, with the polarization of the labor market in global cities within the advanced industrialized countries serving to create employment niches for lower class immigrant women to either service higher income groups or take manufacturing work.

*Cultural Alienation and Conflict*

Migration can be associated with a degree of cultural alienation and even conflict experienced by the migrants as well as the established residents of the destination area. This is due to the fact that migration frequently involves moving to a country or region characterized by very different people from those of the home country, with their own relatively distinct customs. McDowell (1999) argues that cultural conflict and place are connected in that places are made through power relations which construct the rules which define boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial – they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded (McDowell 1999). Because of feelings of insecurity among the dominant social group, cultural conflict can occur, represented by racist prejudice and exclusionary practices of a majority population towards immigrants (Sibley, 1995). Even European immigrants who came to the U.S. at the turn of the century experienced cultural conflict. According to Marcus Eli Ravage (1884-1965) (in Daniels, 2002), the European who emigrated to the U.S., while his skin may have been the same color as those of his new countrymen, brought with him to the U.S. his own deep-rooted tradition and point of view which had been engendered in him by his race and his environment. His Old World traditions conflicted with America from the moment he set foot in his new country.

*Identity, Assimilation and Nationalism*

Just what is identity? Identity, or the sense of self, is constructed and dynamic, social and relational, resulting from experiences and community interactions, rather than a constant thing with which we are born (Huseby-Darvas, 1994; Abed, 2007). Said (1993:336) states that "…no one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are nothing

more than starting points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind…just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities". Likewise, Abed (2007) believes that every one of us carries within him or her components of identities that form a super-identity. Mitchell (2000:276) argues that "…with each historical upheaval, each new conquest, each new round of 'time-space compression', identity itself is radically transformed".

Despite the above arguments, stereotypical constructions of identity endure, like always associating blacks with urban environments, and so therefore, blacks will always be considered out of place in the countryside (Mitchell, 2000). This is an important issue because, as Kinsman (1995: 301; in Mitchell, 2000: 260) argues, when "a group is excluded from…landscapes of national identity…they are excluded to a large degree from the nation itself". This brings us to nationalism, which is a feeling of belonging to the nation. Unfortunately, inequality tends to be incorporated into nationalistic feelings, which inevitably becomes an aspect of national unity. Mitchell (2000) argues that there is the assumption that everyone 'has their place' in the world – and that place is somehow 'naturally' ordained. This assumption encompasses questions of gender, race, as well as national identity, such as 'Who counts as an American?' (Mitchell, 2000). Furthermore, Mitchell (2000) states that people who are considered a threat to the purity of the nation are often violently hunted down. Hence, national identity is at one level about who belongs, but at another level it is about who should be excluded. Said (1978) introduced the idea of imaginative geographies, which are constructions that equate distance with difference. Said (1978) argues that imaginative geographies differentiate 'the same' from 'the other', thereby dividing space into 'ours' and 'theirs'. 'Their' space is seen as strange; not possessing the positive attributes that 'we' possess. Therefore, Said (1978) goes on to say, while the concept of

‘us versus them’ is presented as natural, it is in fact constructed. Abed (2007) argues that “The state of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ acquires new meaning with the realization that our identities are not fixed, not constant, not given”.

Like cultural identity, nation and nationalism are never anything fixed, with Mitchell (2000) arguing for nation as an imagined community. Mitchell (2000) further states that nations are represented as spaces in which members of the nation have a strong bond with each other. However, this bond is imagined, it is not real because there are so many people in the nation that any one person cannot meet than a few of his or her fellow nationals (Mitchell, 2000). Nationalism is also the desire to equate the nation with a particular territory, a space to be defended by the nationals. Mitchell (2000:271) goes on to say that “…nations and national identity are produced in specific historical and geographical contexts as a means of producing a certain kind of loyalty, or sense of belonging, between people.” Nations are imagined and yet at the same time they are real (Mitchell, 2000). Since we now live in an era of deterritorialization, and places themselves are becoming more malleable, it is not so easy to articulate how a nation is defined. Nevertheless, we still do live in a world of nation-states.

While the majority population seldom needs to contemplate their own identities, from the moment of arrival in the U.S., immigrants deal with identity-related confusion, including the problem of being labeled (Huseby-Darvas, 1994). Therefore, Ehrkamp (2007) argues, the creation and negotiation of ethnic identities is a key component of immigrant adaptation. Huseby-Darvas (1994) contemplates how immigrants retain or reproduce a workable culture that continues to be meaningful to them in a world that labels their language, speech pattern, and accent odd, their food and smell weird, their clothes and the way they cover or do not cover their

heads outlandish, their manner of walking and sitting grotesque, their greeting and gesticulating bizarre, and their rituals, beliefs, and customs absurd.

Class plays a role in how immigrants construct identity and assimilation. Nationality and/or race are not as important in determining patterns of association and participation in the host society as social class, with middle and upper-middle class immigrants being more likely to share the values of the dominant classes (Gimenez, 1988). Lower-class immigrants are often isolated from native-born Americans, and their isolation is reinforced by housing and job segregation and language barriers (Martin, 2003). According to Daniels (2002), the more uniform the immigration and the more closely it corresponds in ethnicity, nationality, culture, and class to the existing society, the less severe the identity problem is likely to be.

Ehrkamp (2007) argues that transnational contacts contribute heavily to constructions of migrants' identities. By maintaining multiple ties to their countries of origin, immigrants create new transnational social and cultural spaces for themselves (Faist, 2000), and develop identities across national borders and societies (Glick-Schiller, Basch, et al., 1992). Therefore, immigrants continue to maintain ties with their country of origin, which affects their identity, however, their identity is also affected by local contacts in their new place of residence (Ehrkamp, 2007).

Many scholars have argued that migration involves a social or cultural change in the life of the migrant, particularly when dealing with ethnic minority migration. This change can take several forms, including assimilation and acculturation. Assimilation is the extent to which a minority group comes to resemble the dominant or majority group. Nagel (2002:258-261) states that "…assimilation signifies observable, material processes of accommodation of and conformity to dominant norms" and that "over successive generations, an ethnic subgroup experiences the rupturing of primary social bonds and absorption into mainstream society".

Gordon (1964) asserts that the process of assimilation can be assessed in terms of immigrants' identification with the host society, adoption of host society culture, and intermarriage with members of the host society.

At the turn of the century the concept of the melting pot came into existence in the U.S., whereby it was believed that Anglo-Saxon conformity was the ideal goal, and that all minorities would be assimilated into it, producing a homogenous new race (McCarus, 1994). This assimilation model was based on white Europeans that were able to come to the U.S. and assimilate very easily, a model that is not practical in this age of globalization. Some scholars argue that the circumstances which allowed European immigrants to assimilate into American society, for example 'racial' similarity between natives and newcomers and abundant manufacturing employment opportunities, no longer exist. These scholars suggest that assimilation trajectories have become segmented: some immigrant groups have a high degree of mainstream relationships and a low retention of cultural traditions and values, others develop and maintain identification with the larger society while at the same time retaining the traditions and values of their culture of origin, some separated individuals have a low mainstream identification and a high cultural retention, and still others (particularly those with low skill levels and of a non-white race) have low cultural retention as well as a low level of mainstream relationships, and experience downward assimilation into the 'black underclass' (Berry, 1990; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; Nagel, 2002).

King (2005) argues that while earlier studies of assimilation have made the general assumption that immigrants would either have to reject the mainstream culture, while remaining loyal to their ethnic culture, or else assimilate into the larger society by rejecting their ethnic culture, more recently the complex, multidimensional characteristic of social/ethnic identity has

been recognized. By World War II the idea of assimilation had begun to yield ground to the concept of acculturation, the process by which immigrants with minority status are integrated into the dominant culture by adapting to or borrowing traits from that culture (McCarus, 1994 ; King, 2005). Acculturation is a linear process that increases with duration of U.S. residence (Read, 2004).

*Educational Levels of Immigrants and Assimilation*

The educational level of an immigrant is directly related to employability, which plays a major role in immigrants' ability to assimilate. Scholars are increasingly recognizing cultural and class diversity within ethnic groups, with recent immigrants coming to the U.S. appearing to have either a high level of education or a low level. There are significant variations within ethnic groups in their access to education and economic resources and therefore in their degree of assimilation to the dominant U.S. culture (Read, 2004). Ethnic immigrants with higher educational levels and professional skills are mainly positioned in the middle class, are dispersed throughout the U.S., and have greater interaction and assimilation with the larger American culture (Boyle et al., 1998). Furthermore, employment-based immigrants enjoy the greatest labor market success due to their higher skills and the greater likelihood that they have a job prior to being granted permanent residency status.

Boyle et al. (1998) argue that there is strong evidence that ethnic groups often experience poor work opportunities, likely involving issues of racism and discrimination. The discrimination experienced by females in ethnic minorities is often especially severe (Boyle et al., 1998). Immigrants who come to the U.S. often have qualifications and experience that suit them for higher-skilled jobs than what they end up doing once they arrive. However, although

some may expect to experience a substantial drop in the occupational hierarchy in the U.S. labor market, many come anyway; for the blue-collar work they find in the U.S. may offer them a path to a better life than the white-collar job they left behind or a better future for their children (Boyle et al., 1998). Work opportunities may be scarce for refugees, who are often unprepared, and potentially less well-suited, for migration than are economic migrants. Empirical research on refugee populations has generally shown a high degree of initial downward mobility and lower employment rates (Boyle et al., 1998).

*Refugees*

In 1951, the UN defined a refugee as any person "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear or for reasons other than personal convenience, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (Boyle et al., 1998). The U.S. only accepts a fixed number of refugees each year as determined by the President and Congress. Although refugees constitute only a portion of total immigration, approximately 8 percent in 2000 for the U.S., their effects are disproportionately large in terms of changing the immigrant profiles in metropolitan statistical areas such as Atlanta that contain an established refugee resettlement program (Brown et al., 2007). Established refugee resettlement programs bring into being a concentrated community of fellow nationals, which can prove to be highly beneficial to newly arrived refugees (Rogg, 1971).

Refugees who enter the U.S. have a number of internal issues they toil with in addition to their encounters with nationals. Boyle et al. (1998) argue that refugees who enter the U.S. may have had to have made the very difficult decision of leaving part of their family behind as well as

the prospect of having their families permanently divided between countries or even continents. Likewise, refugees must deal with the loss of place attachments, considerable financial loss, great financial insecurity, and the fear of what a new life in a new country will be like. Upon arrival in their new country, refugees typically deal with feelings of disorientation and a sense of loss. Refugees must learn to deal with a new way of life, new customs, a new language, and even new administrative procedures (Boyle et al., 1998). Moreover, refugees feel a sense of lost status in the community, lost culture, lost identity, and isolation (Boyle et al., 1998).

Being labeled a refugee can have hurtful side effects. Boyle et al. (1998) argue that refugees are particularly vulnerable to the process of labeling, since forced migrations are often generated by crises that develop rapidly, usually in conditions of scarcity. Labels frequently become stereotypes, carrying with them assumed needs. Once such labels are in place, and especially under conditions of unequal power relations, stereotypes may become self-reinforcing, with refugees feeling that they have to conform to demonstrate their gratitude towards those who assist them in order to receive further assistance (Boyle et al., 1998).

## U.S. Migration Since the 1800s

### *Why Migrants Flocked to the U.S.*

In order to better understand Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants' experiences in the U.S. today, it is important to look at the history of immigration in the U.S. Part of the reason the U.S. is viewed as an immigration country is that more immigrants have come here than any other country in the world. Between 55 and 65 million settlers are thought to have left Europe between 1820 and 1930, many of them coming to the U.S. Immigration to the U.S. reached its peak in

1900-1909, with over 8.2 million immigrants recorded as entering the country. According to Jones (1990), the combination of cheap fertile land in the U.S. and poverty, famine and high population growth rates in European countries produced what is arguably the most important migratory movement in human history. However, large-scale international migration grew only after the development of new transport technologies and new opportunities in the nineteenth century. With the steam-powered transportation revolution, transportation of immigrants became a big business, providing millions of peasants the practical means of leaving their native villages (Daniels, 2002). During the 1800s, immigrants felt that America was politically an ideal country, and this was one of the main reasons for them wanting to come (Huseby-Darvas, 1994). It seems that the immigrants' dream is unbreakable in America. Because of the American ideal - the ideal of the Constitution, that all men are created equal - there is not another country in the history of the world where people have wanted to go so much (Huseby-Darvas, 1994).

*Mass Waves of Immigration to the U.S.*

There have been four major waves of immigration to the U.S. The first wave arrived before entries began to be recorded in 1820. A large percentage of these immigrants were English, with Scots, Scots-Irish, Germans, and people from the Netherlands, France, and Spain making up most of the rest. These migrants were motivated by a combination of religious, political, and economic factors (Martin, 2003). The second wave of immigrants, who arrived between 1820 and 1860, were mostly German, British, and Irish immigrants. These groups were mostly peasants displaced from agriculture, artisans made jobless by the Industrial Revolution, and Irish escaping extreme poverty and famine (Martin, 2003). Roman Catholics predominated in this second wave. The third wave of immigrants, who arrived between 1880 and 1914, were

mostly Southern and Eastern Europeans, Chinese, Japanese, and other Asian laborers who settled in the western states. Included in this immigration wave were large numbers of people of Jewish and Eastern Orthodox religions. There was actually an immigration pause during World War I. However, when immigration picked back up again in the 1920s, quotas were in place which curtailed immigration (see Table 1-1). During this time, immigration from Mexico and other Western Hemisphere nations became increasingly important (Martin, 2003). The fourth wave of immigrants, which occurred from 1965 to present, saw a change in the preference system. While the older systems gave preference to those from Northern and Western Europe, the new system gave priority to people with U.S. relatives and to a small number of people with outstanding accomplishments or special skills (Martin, 2003). These changes, along with prosperity in Europe, altered the composition of U.S. immigrants. The third and fourth waves of immigration brought people from countries that had not previously sent large numbers of immigrants, raising questions about language, religion, and culture (Martin, 2003).

*Historical Immigration Policy*

Fear of foreigners, and the ensuing government policies created to ‘protect’ Americans from them, is nothing new. A look at historical immigration policy shows that this has been a common occurrence throughout U.S. history. U.S. immigration policies determine how many, from where, and under what status immigrants arrive. These policies have gone through three major phases. The first phase, from 1780 to 1875, was a laissez-faire policy toward immigration. Federal, state, and local governments, private employers, shipping companies and railroads, and churches were free to promote immigration to the U.S. (Martin, 2003). The need for labor,

combined with the freedoms established in the U.S., made the new nation a good place for newcomers at this time.

The second phase, from 1875 to 1920, consisted of qualitative restrictions. The growing numbers of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe aroused feelings of insecurity among the overwhelmingly Protestant and rural American populations. This fear of foreigners led to the imposition of qualitative restrictions aimed at barring certain types of immigrants, including Chinese.

The third phase, which began in 1921, involved quantitative restrictions. In the beginning of the 20th century, there was a great demand and need for labor, opening up the ports to millions of Southern and Eastern Europeans. Even though labor was needed, Americans feared the millions of 'strange foreigners' from Eastern and Southern Europe and considered then racially, culturally, and intellectually inferior (Huseby-Darvas, 1994). Therefore, as Eastern and Southern Europeans and even non-Europeans came to dominate immigration into the U.S., the U.S. government began considering regulation. Included with those who were involved in the promotion of immigration restriction were several geographers. Madison Grant, a councilor of the American Geographic Society, provided Congress with race data to show the genetic inferiority of people from central and southern Europe, and Harvard geographer Robert Ward, who was President of the AAG in 1917, was Chairman of Boston's Immigration Restriction League (Crampton, 2007). And so the 1924 Immigration Act was put into place which ensured that annual national quotas were set for immigration, with the size of quota for each country directly linked to the size of the existing settler population of that nationality within the U.S. (Boye, Halfacree, and Robinson, 1998). Congress set an annual limit of 150,000 immigrants, plus accompanying wives and children. However, the composition of migrant flows was

artificially created, with certain European nationality groups, such as the British, being given preferential treatment. The quota used race and ethnicity as a form of qualification and was based on the assumption that lighter skinned Europeans would easily Americanize, and that nonwhites would not Americanize at all (Jiobu, 1990).

Due to the Immigration Act of 1924, Europeans dominated major migration flows into the U.S. until the early 1960s. However, around this time in the U.S., economic growth and post-war recovery demanded extra labor. Therefore, legislation was introduced to abandon the old system of quota immigration and allow people to enter the U.S. from different parts of the world, including the Middle East. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Asians were treated like other immigrants and, also for the first time, limits were placed on immigration from the Western Hemisphere (Martin, 2003).

Until the 1980s, U.S. immigration law changed once each generation. However, the accelerating pace of global change has affected migration patterns, and Congress responded with several major changes in immigration laws between 1980 and 1990, three more in 1996, and since 2001, antiterrorism laws have been put into place which affect immigration (Martin, 2003). The first change during the 1980s was the definition of refugees, with the U.S. adopting the United Nation's definition of refugees. Another major policy change involved illegal immigration, focusing mostly on Mexicans who were entering the U.S. and staying without permission. In 1990, some U.S. businesses and other groups feared a shortage of skilled labor. Therefore Congress, in the Immigration Act of 1990, raised the annual limit on the number of employment preference immigrants from 54,000 to 140,000 a year (Martin, 2003). In 1996 Congress approved three major immigration-related laws. These laws were motivated by concern about terrorism, the desire to find savings to balance the federal budget and to end

Table 1-1. Major U.S. Immigration Phases, Policies, and Impacts

| TIME FRAME | MAJOR IMMIGRATION PHASES | MAJOR IMMIGRATION POLICIES | IMPACTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1780 to 1875 | Laissez-faire | | U.S. a good place for newcomers |
| 1875 to 1920 | Qualitative restrictions | | Barring of certain types of immigrants |
| | | Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 | Barring of Chinese immigrants |
| 1921 to Present | Quantitative restrictions | | Annual national immigration quotas |
| | | Immigration Act of 1924 | Europeans dominated major U.S. migration flows |
| | | Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 | Quotas lifted, Middle Eastern and Asian peoples enter U.S., restrictions placed on immigrants from Western hemisphere |
| | | Immigration Act of 1990 | Annual limit on employment preference immigrants raised from 54,000 to 140,000 per year |
| | | USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 | Expanded government's power to conduct electronic surveillance, detain foreigners without charges, and penetrate money-laundering banks |
| | | EBSVERA Act of 2002 | Added 3,000 immigration inspectors and investigators, required universities to keep better track of foreign students, enhanced the scrutiny of visa applications of people from countries which are believed to be sponsors of terrorism |

Source: Adapted from Martin (2003)

perceived abuses of the U.S. welfare system by immigrants, and frustration with continued illegal immigration (Martin, 2003). In the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Congress enacted legislation to fight terrorism. Congress approved antiterrorism legislation that affected immigrants, including the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001, which expanded the government's power to conduct electronic surveillance, detain foreigners without charges, and penetrate money-laundering banks. The EBSVERA Act of 2002 added 3,000 immigration inspectors and investigators, required universities to keep better track of foreign students, and enhanced the scrutiny of visa applications of people from countries which are believed to be sponsors of terrorism (Martin, 2003). Countries currently believed by the U.S. government to be 'state sponsors of terrorism' are Cuba, Iran, Sudan, and Syria (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

*Issues of Race in U.S. Immigration*

The 1924 Immigration Act was based on race, yet anthropologists today question whether race is biologically real. According to Marks (2006), anthropologists have learned that human groups are fluid, biocultural units. Winlow (2006) points out that, critical geographers, among others, in recent years have come to understand the idea of 'race' as a social construct. The idea of race was a tool used to make the exploiter or excluder of other groups feel better about their actions (Marks, 2006; Winlow, 2006). It offers the exploiter or excluder the ability to see the one being exploited or excluded as 'other'. In the Victorian era, the idea of a number of discrete racial groups or types was largely based on physical appearance. Winlow (2006) notes that, of specific relevance to geography as an emerging discipline was the persistence of environmental determinism that frequently portrayed races as human responses to environmental conditions.

However, today it is now believed that differences that exist from person to person are principally cultural (Marks, 2006).

While it is now believed that race is not biologically real, around the turn of the century there were differing views on the subject. In the time before the 1924 Immigration Act was put into place, when the U.S. was seriously considering whether all the European emigrants should be allowed to enter, anthropologist Franz Boas was trying to affect U.S. immigration policies with his scientific work (Huseby-Darvas, 1994). He was employed by a Senate-appointed commission that was to investigate which European populations were acceptable and which were less so (Huseby-Darvas, 1994). Boas' methods included using different instruments to measure various body parts of numerous immigrants and their American-born offspring. In his report to the commission Boas stressed that investigation of a large number of families showed that the makeup of man may be considerably influenced by social and geographic environment, rather than by race. Boas felt that the belief in the hereditary superiority of some people over others must be given up (Huseby-Darvas, 1994). But Boas' objections and reasoning against the quota system and other restrictive measures in immigration policies were ignored (Huseby-Darvas, 1994).

Meanwhile, Francis Amasa Walker used data collected from the ninth and tenth censuses to question whether the new immigrants, generally regarded as biologically and culturally inferior to the old immigrants, could be culturally assimilated into American society. Furthermore, William Zebina Ripley, one of the ruling elite in the U.S. in the nineteenth century, was a major proponent of the idea of a biological racial hierarchy, and its effects on the U.S. population (Winlow, 2006). Ripley used statistics to draw conclusions about the different biological race types, and to link social and moral issues to these traits (Winlow, 2006). Ripley believed that,

hand-in-hand with a biological hierarchy, there existed a moral and intellectual hierarchy of races. Ripley's metaphorical mapping of European race traits onto the U.S. landscape was used to reinforce notions that particular races belonged in particular places (Winlow, 2006). Winlow (2006) argues that the study of Ripley's cartographic products demonstrates how the landscapes of Europe and the U.S. were inscribed with racial categorizations, reinforcing notions of otherness.

*Middle Eastern and Muslim Immigrants*

Most early Arab[2] immigrants to the U.S. were from Lebanon and Syria, and most were Christian (Daniels, 2002). Arab immigrants came to the U.S. along with some of the groups of European immigrants. In the early twentieth century, the Naples port, which accounted for a large number of immigrants, not only carried Italians, but Greeks, Syrians, and Lebanese as well. The first wave of immigrants was relatively poor, and not well educated. As Daniels (2002) points out, the enthusiastic reports of Arab merchants who had come to the U.S. prior, the activities of recruiting agents, economic pressures at home, and, after 1908, compulsory military service, all led to large scale migration from Lebanon to the U.S.

The first Arabs to discover the economic opportunities of the U.S. were a group of Christian tradesmen who came to the U.S. to exhibit Syrian wares at the Philadelphia World's Fair in 1876. These Arabs, like many peoples who came to the U.S., were seeking opportunity. The overwhelming majority of early Arabs began earning their living in the U.S. as peddlers. This was a specialization they developed after emigrating. Initially most peddlers sold rosaries,

[2]The terms 'Arab' and 'Middle Eastern' are used somewhat interchangeably throughout this thesis, even though these terms are not necessarily interchangeable. This is because I use the term 'Middle Eastern' in my work in order to include groups in the Middle East who are not Arabs, such as Kurds and Iranians. However, some works cited in the thesis use the term 'Arab', and I did not alter the original citation.

costume jewelry, and notions – the sort of things that would fit into a small suitcase or pack (Daniels, 2002). It was imperative that the peddler acculturate quickly, for unlike the immigrant who spent his life in ethnic enclaves and worked at ethnic job sites, the peddler had an economic stake in learning the language and culture of other Americans, even if only enough to peddle their wares (McCarus, 1994; Daniels, 2002). Once the peddler learned the ropes, the economic rewards were greater than those for most contemporary immigrants (Daniels, 2002). Small communities were formed by Arab immigrants that served as bases to sustain the itinerant peddlers and small businessmen (Naff, 1994). Although they had originally come intending to make enough money to be able to return to their home countries and live comfortably, for the most part they ended up bringing over their families and becoming permanent residents. It seems that Arabs who immigrated in the early part of the 1900s were incorporated more smoothly into American society than later Arab immigrants. Cainkar (2002) argues that this may have been due to the fact that most were Christians and were considered white, as well as the fact that, at the time, the U.S. was not so involved in the Arab world. New York was the initial center of Arab immigrants. However, the expansion of Arab peddling territory meant that suppliers had to move – largely south and west – as well. By 1930 the census noted just over 7,500 'Syrians' in New York City, while Detroit was becoming the Arab American second city, with more than 5,000 (Daniels, 2002). By 1970 Detroit would be the Arab American capital, with more than seventy thousand persons, both Christians and Muslims.

Religious institutions were established by lay initiative after settlement (Daniels, 2002). Between 1890 and 1895 New York Arabs founded three churches, one for each of the three major sects represented among the immigrants – Melkite, Maronite, and Orthodox – and imported priests to serve them. Many Arabs in the far-flung settlements were not served by any

ethnic church, and therefore, many of these families attended 'American' churches, both Roman Catholic and Protestant (Daniels, 2002).

Table 1-2. Major Waves of Middle Eastern Immigrants in the U.S.

| TIME FRAME | COUNTRY OF ORIGIN | DEFINING QUALITIES |
|---|---|---|
| Early 20th Century | Lebanon and Syria | Christian, poor, not well educated |
| After World War II | From various Arab countries | Many were Muslims, more highly educated and more financially secure |
| 1978-1979 | Iran | Came to U.S. because of Iranian Revolution and Iran-Iraq War |
| Present | From various Arab countries | Many are Muslims, large numbers of refugees as well economic immigrants. |

Source: Adapted from Daniels (2002), McAuliffe (2007), and McCarus (1994)

After World War II, during the second immigration wave of Arabs to the U.S., economic factors did not play as large a role as the Arab-Israeli conflict and civil war. These immigrants came from various regions of the Arab world and a good number of them practiced Islam, a religion that Americans were not so familiar with. Immigrants in this group tended to be more financially secure when they arrived than those who had come earlier for economic opportunity. Likewise, they were generally more highly educated or came for a higher education, and they were prepared to settle here permanently (McCarus, 1994). Suleiman (1994) notes that the second major wave was one of politically sophisticated and active individuals who brought with them a sense of Arab identity. Furthermore, the Iranian revolution of 1978-1979 marked the onset of large-scale contemporary Iranian emigration to the U.S. (McAuliffe, 2007). Many of these Iranians emigrated due to the initial persecution of the elites and political minority groups

as well as the continuous persecution of religious minorities and the uncertainties of the Iran-Iraq war (McAuliffe, 2007).

*Atlanta Migration Since the 1800s*

Between 1880 and 1896, immigrants made up between two and four percent of Atlanta's total population, with the majority occupying a relatively high economic and social status within the city. Most of the immigrants were scattered throughout the city, and a high percentage of Atlanta's foreign born were married to Americans. Mebane (1967) argues that these facts suggest that most of these immigrants made a rapid adjustment to their new life in Atlanta, quickly assimilating into the social and economic structure of the Atlanta community. Mebane (1967) goes on to say that one of the most important factors contributing to the rapid adjustment of the Atlanta immigrants was their relatively high economic status, most likely due to the selective migration of those immigrants coming to the South. The vast majority of the immigrants who came to Atlanta near the turn of the century arrived first in the large Northern cities before deciding to travel south. The decision to come south presented many difficulties to the average immigrant, namely the fact that transportation to the South was more difficult to obtain than transportation to the West. In addition, due to the small numbers of foreign born in the area, it would have been more difficult for them to maintain their ethnic culture, including language and food. This most likely sped up the process of total integration into the community. Since there were no heavy concentrations of any one ethnic group (except Russian Jews), and hence no ethnic enclaves in Atlanta, this probably hastened the acceptance of these immigrants by the native residents (Mebane, 1967).

All foreign born reported in the 1880 census for Atlanta were male. The majority were German (34%) and Irish (32.5%). Early in the 20th century, immigration of non-Europeans to the South was prohibited, either by law or by negative cultural sanctioning (Lamphere, 1992). As a result, Atlanta received new immigrants at the turn of the century, but they were predominantly of European descent. This should be sufficient explanation as to why the 1880 census reported only one immigrant in Atlanta from the Middle East (Turkey).

Since the 1970s, Atlanta has been promoted as an international city, where people are "too busy to hate", the 1996 Olympics helping to solidify this claim (Murphy, 1997; Waldrop, 1993). Nevertheless, Atlanta has a history of conflict and segregation that affects the lives of immigrants to the city (Fogarty, 2002; Murphy, 1997). A study done in 1994 by the Center for Applied Research in Anthropology at Georgia State University found that Atlanta does not match in diversity to its claims of being an international city, with Atlanta suburbs shown to be populated by people of predominantly European ancestry and African Americans forming a majority of the population in Fulton County (Fogarty, 2002). According to this study, the most culturally diverse county in the region is Dekalb County (metropolitan Atlanta's second-largest county), with Atlanta's largest Hispanic and Asian populations (Fogarty, 2002). Being the area's most culturally diverse county is arguably Dekalb's greatest strength because, according to Waldrop (1993), while locals patronize ethnic business districts in Dekalb during the week, on weekends people come from all over the state, and even surrounding states, to shop at these unique ethnic businesses. A large reason for Dekalb's diversity is the location there of several refugee resettlement agencies, with large numbers of people from Afghanistan, Bosnia, Burundi, Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Gambia, Iraq, Kosovo, Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan moving to the area since the 1990s.

According to Dameron and Murphy (1997 in Fogarty, 2002:24), "…through the 1970s most immigrants to Atlanta were relatively well off economically, were in Atlanta for business reasons, lived in dispersed neighborhoods and did not use ethnicity as an organizing principle for political or economic power". When U.S. immigration policies were reformed in 1965, making it easier for existing residents to bring family members to the U.S. from other countries and also encouraging immigrants to fill jobs, the 'fourth wave' of immigrants began arriving and by the 1980s, became a factor in Atlanta's demographic profile (Lamphere, 1992). The rapid growth of immigrants to Atlanta after 1965 led to new developments in the ways ethnic groups organized themselves (Dameron and Murphy, 1997). The majority of newcomers to Atlanta were working-class people, and working-class neighborhoods of 'others' arose, with these groups of immigrants interacting with each other rather than forming enclaves of one ethnicity or another. For example, it is now common to see Mexican and Asian businesses in the same commercial complexes (Dameron and Murphy, 1997). During the 1980s, the number of people in Georgia who did not speak English in the home increased by 113%, the highest rate for any state in the U.S. (Dameron and Murphy, 1997). Therefore, Atlanta, like most other larger cities in the U.S., is faced with the issue of a change in its racial and ethnic balance.

*Today's Immigration Discourses*

Today's immigration discourses are mainly concerned with the ability of terrorists to slip into the U.S. as well as the burden to the American taxpayer of illegal immigrants from Mexico. A major issue is how to handle the illegal immigrant situation. There is opposition from many Americans to extending citizenship to illegal immigrants. While some of this opposition is based in prejudice, others feel that U.S. jobs are being given to illegal immigrants –mostly Mexicans-

which could be given to tax-paying U.S. citizens. Many Americans are in favor of legal immigration, but not illegal immigration. They feel that immigration laws should exist so that taxpayers are not paying for the health care, education, and other services of those who do not pay into the tax system. Still others are upset that immigrants, both legal and illegal, come into the U.S. and do not learn to speak English.

Many Americans worry that immigration is changing the characteristics of the population. But, according to Martin (2003), public opinion often changes with economic circumstances. During the 1990s, when the economy expanded and unemployment rates were low, public opinion became more tolerant toward immigration. However, terrorism and a weakening economy have made Americans more restrictionist at the start of the 21st century (Martin, 2003). Even though American public opinion favored stopping or slowing down immigration in these years since, 9/11, no lawmaker of influence has moved to reverse the U.S.'s generous immigration policy (Martin, 2003).

## Contemporary Middle Eastern and Muslim Immigration Experiences

### *Numbers of Immigrants*

Accurate statistics on Arab and Muslim immigrants in the U.S. are difficult to compile, especially for a temporal comparison, because the 2000 Census was the first census to report Arab ancestry, and religion is not reported in the census. According to the 2000 Census, the U.S. Arab population, which numbered over 1 million in 2000, increased by nearly 40 percent during the 1990s. In 2000, more than one-third (37 percent) of those reporting an Arab ancestry were Lebanese. The next largest specific groups were Syrian and Egyptian (12 percent each).

According to the U.S. Census, in the last decade the Arab population increased in almost every state, with the Arab population in Georgia increasing from 10,357 in 1990 to 17,110 in 2000 (de la Cruz and Brittingham, 2003).

*Negative Media Images and Stereotypes of Middle Easterners and Muslims*

The way people see themselves and others can be greatly influenced by the media through the particular representations it conveys. Because of this, McAuliffe (2007) argues, the media plays a crucial role in the creation of social identities. The media creates expectations in the American mainstream of 'what a Muslim is' as well as 'what the Middle East is like', with the attachment of negative meanings to images of Muslims and Middle Easterners. Abdelrazek (2005) observed that, prior to 9/11, the prevailing stereotype of Middle-Eastern Americans was somewhat negative but not particularly well articulated. The events of 9/11 changed all of this.

Distorted media images of Islam and the Middle East contribute to the negative stereotypes many Americans hold of Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans. These groups must constantly counter Orientalist conceptions of the Middle East (Erakat, 2005). However, negative media images of Middle Easterners and Muslims are nothing new. Little (2002) notes that a glance at eighteenth- and nineteenth-century popular culture shows that Muslims and most other peoples of the Middle East were depicted as inferior, decadent, and untrustworthy figures who bore close watching. In more recent times, popular magazines such as *National Geographic*, Hollywood movies such as *True Lies*, even such innocent children's movies as *Aladdin* perpetuate this orientalist outlook (Little, 2002). Little (2002: 314) goes on to argue:

> Having been fed a steady diet of books, films, and news reports depicting Arabs as demonic anti-Western others and Israelis as heroic pro-Western partners and having watched in horror the events of 11 September 2001, the American public understandably fears Osama bin Laden and cheers Aladdin.

Shaheen (1984) argues that, since the late 1960s, Arabs and Muslims were the only groups for whom it was socially acceptable for the media to negatively stereotype. Because of these negative stereotypes, even though most Muslim and Arab immigrants have been integrated into the U.S. economically, and frequently become citizens, they have remained a targeted minority.

Abdelrazek (2005) asserts that, in many instances, it seems that Westerners are blinded by their assumptions and their reliance upon the negative and demonizing stereotypes propagated by the media. Ghareeb (1983) argues that, when it comes to Middle Eastern history and culture, most Americans' educational experience is very limited**,** allowing inaccurate stereotypes of Middle Easterners to continue. Likewise, Chami (2003) argues that, due to the selective information fed to the American general public by U.S. media, Americans know very little about Islam. Unfortunately, stereotypes do not lead to a clear understanding of the lives of Middle Eastern and/or Muslim Americans. Falah (2005) argues that stereotyping is damaging not only for Muslims, but also for those who buy into these negative, monolithic images, as they will eventually suffer the consequences of their limited geopolitical awareness.

In particular, stereotyping leads many Americans to believe that Muslims are a homogenous group. However, this is not the case. Modood (2003) argues that some Muslims are devout while some are not, some are political while others are not, some identify more with country of origin while others identify more with the nationality of citizenship, some make their mosques top priority while others make campaigning against discrimination, unemployment, or

Zionism their top priority. Modood (2003) goes on to say that 'Muslim' is only a category, useful in ordering or understanding, but with many subcategories contained within it, just at the categories 'American', 'middle-class', or 'Christian' have many subcategories.

U.S. media does not give a 'fair and balanced' picture of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, depicting Palestinians as radical Islamic terrorists and Israelis as noble, innocent victims surrounded by unruly Arabs (Little, 2002). Because this is the only viewpoint many Americans are exposed to, they believe it to be factual. Understandably, Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants may be uncomfortable voicing their opinions on the matter, being seen by some Americans as supporting terrorism when they show support for the Palestinians. For example, shortly after Erakat (2005) started up a pro-Palestinian organization at UC Berkeley, accusations of anti-Semitism began circulating around the school, and the organization quickly lost the support of other student organizations at the university. The fact that Erakat's viewpoint on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was not seen as valid by many of her fellow students served to make her feel not only invisible, but erased.

McCarus (1994) argues that stereotypes, such as seeing the 'other' as inferior, permit the stereotyper to rationalize the victimization of the 'other'. McCarus (1994) goes on to say that major policy decisions are justified by stereotypes of Middle Easterners and Muslims, leading people not to questions its government's policies when, for example, it decides to start an illegal with an Islamic country. Afzal-Khan (2005) argues that the U.S. media has not presented Americans with a true understanding of either Islam or the roots of terrorism.

*Negative Media Images and Stereotypes of Middle Eastern and Muslim Women*

Falah (2005) argues that the constant repetition of a limited number of media images of Muslim women narrows understanding of Muslim women's lives and reduces the experiences and political sentiments of Muslim women to a few stereotypes. Falah (2005) goes on to say that the label 'Muslim Woman', and all of the connotations that go along with it, has been used in post 9/11 U.S. to, as many Americans see it, briefly yet accurately describe women who practice the Islamic faith. Typically, the connotations that accompany this label are negative in the eyes of many Americans. Middle Eastern and Muslim women are rarely portrayed as having 'normal' lives by U.S. standards – that is, as simply going to work or to school, having fun or enjoying their lives and their families. Falah (2005) argues that Muslim women are often shown in despair, with editors selecting pictures of Middle Eastern and Muslim women who are crying and upset. Therefore, Americans rarely see Muslim women depicted as doing anything other than crying passively as they are victimized, and never leading a 'normal' existence. Falah (2005) goes on to say that images of Muslim women are used almost exclusively to communicate the abnormality of life in Muslim societies; marked by violence, religious fanaticism, and political turmoil. As Hardt (2004) argues, it seems that the power of photographs to convey 'the truth' remains relatively unchallenged.

Falah (2005) suggests that the visual representations of Muslim and Middle Eastern women typically have served to reinforce images of Muslim and Middle Eastern society as the cultural, political, and moral 'other' of the West, proliferating the West's sense of fear and fascination with the Muslim world. Newspaper editors seem to be aware, given the actual content of newspaper reports, that the U.S. public has little interest in learning about the lives of

‘ordinary’ Muslim women, but that they do have an insatiable desire to be reminded of the great social and cultural divide that exists between themselves and the Muslim world (Falah, 2005).

According to Naber (2005), given the way gender, Middle Easterners and Muslims are played out in the media, oppression of Middle Eastern and Muslim women by Middle Eastern and Muslim men seems to be a common occurrence. In addition, the media presents all Middle Eastern and Muslim women as illiterates who are not allowed to leave the house. Naber (2005) goes on to say that U.S. media makes it seem as though Middle Eastern and Muslim women in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq are in need of being liberated and saved from their savage men - a big part of their oppression being forced to wear the *hijab*. While some women in the Middle East and Muslim countries are oppressed, just as some women in the U.S. are oppressed, many Muslim women have made the choice to wear the *hijab*. This concept is not understood by many Americans. They can’t believe that a Muslim woman would choose this ‘oppression’ for herself, when in fact, for many Muslim women the adoption of Islamic dress has been a personal choice, and not enforced by family, state, or local culture (Franks, 2000). But many Americans do not understand the importance to a Muslim woman of expressing her religion on the outside, by her attire. Some Americans, while wearing tight mini skirts and painful four inch heals, or business suits with ties tied tightly around their necks, cannot understand why a Muslim woman would actually want to wear such constricting clothing (Mernissi, 2001).

*Distrust, Discrimination, and Surveillance of Middle Eastern and Muslim Immigrants*

Public consciousness of a large Muslim presence in the U.S. began with the first Iraq War in the 1990s and reached its peak in the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11. Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans are now the victims of misguided American anger. Because of this there

have been problems with discrimination- including derogation, denial, and aggression- against immigrants of Middle Eastern and Islamic origins to the U.S. Now, in the wake of 9/11, more and more American Muslims are fearful that new policies relating to the screening of migrants, including the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 and EBSVERA Act of 2002 (see Table 1-1), surveillance of communal institutions, and general distrust of those who share their faith may mean a rise in hostility against them (Rose 2006). While many Americans see Muslims as a monolithic group to be feared, they do not take into account that Muslims were victimized by the attacks of 9/11 alongside their fellow Americans. Hundreds of Muslims perished in the World Trade Center. It seems that the terrorists of 9/11 did not have the welfare of American Muslims at heart.

Lefebvre (1996) argues that the rights to the city are the rights of all citizens to shape urban life and to benefit from it. However, Amin (2006) argues that many urban dwellers do not seem to have this right. In Western society, lack of rights are seen in the form of growing vilification and intolerance of immigrants, especially those of Middle Eastern and Muslim origins. In many Western societies, Amin (2006:1017) argues, "…a new paradox of rights has arisen, involving constraints on the civil freedoms of many urban-dwellers in the name of the individual rights of the so-called majority". Amin (2006) offers as an example the rapid rise of surveillance technologies which is both an encroachment on civil liberties and a means of protecting the public against harm. Furthermore, Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans are profiled at airports, schools and universities, in the workplace, at border points, and by immigration officials in the selective enforcement of immigration laws (Kayyali 2006). In response, U.S. Middle Eastern and Muslim organizations such as The Council for American Islamic Relations in the U.S. have been created to identify and redress instances of discrimination

against Muslims in the workplace, in schools, in hospitals, and in other public contexts (Haddad and Smith, 2002).

As a paradox to arguments about the mistreatment of Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans as a result of misguided American anger and distrust, Cainkar (2002) states that there appears to be a marked increase in public education about Islam, with Middle Easterners and Muslims being invited to speak at public forums and to engage in dialogue. Furthermore, according to 2002 reports, Muslim American organizations stated that the vast majority of Middle Easterners and Muslims experienced special caring, kindness and protection from persons outside their communities in the past year (Cainkar, 2002).

*Identity and Assimilation*

Read (2004) argues that, although popular stereotypes exist of how Middle Easterners and Muslims live their lives in the U.S., there are diverse Middle Eastern and Muslim American communities whose assimilation into American society varies by nativity, social class, and culture. Since Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants in the U.S. do not all belong to the same social class, the way they lead their lives is no more the same than the way lower-, middle-, and upper-class Americans lead their lives (Cainkar, 1994). For example, a popular stereotype of Middle Eastern-American women portrays them as Islamic traditionalists – veiled, submissive, and secluded within the home. However, Middle Eastern-American women's assimilation experiences are more complicated than this. On the one hand, Middle Eastern Americans are a relatively well-educated and affluent ethnic group, and so there are many employment opportunities available to them. On the other hand, Middle Eastern cultural and religious customs reinforce traditional gender roles, especially those regarding women's responsibilities in

the home and family (Read, 2004). Thus, it depends on the individual woman as to which factors will play a greater role in her assimilation experience. In another example, McAuliffe (2007) points out the differences between Iranian immigrants who are actively practicing Muslims, those who are secular, and those 'cultural Muslims' whose practices fall somewhere in between. According to McAuliffe (2007), with the practice of 'Cultural Islam', Iranian immigrants' everyday social actions remain imbued with 'Muslim values' due to the strong association of Iranian identity with Islam. For these immigrants, Islam guides rather than rules the actions of the individual. Individuals practicing cultural Islam, though not expected to have as easy an assimilation experience as those who are secular, are expected to have an easier assimilation experience than those immigrants who are actively practicing Islam.

Some Middle Eastern immigrants, especially those who are secular and those in the middle- to upper-classes, interact significantly with mainstream America. Many Muslim Middle Eastern Americans are secular, often being successful professionals, students, and business owners. As Jamal (2005) argues, non-mosqued immigrants have been able to move through society relatively unaffected by discrimination.

Afzal-Khan (2005) suggests that Muslim communities in the U.S. need to mediate multiple identities: they have to negotiate between reaching out to the American community at large with one hand and networking within Muslim communities with the other. Many Middle Eastern immigrants have made deliberate attempts at mediating multiple identities. Nagel (2002) asserts that Arabs may compartmentalize their identities in different realms of life, placing their Arabness in a private, personal, cultural realm and their Westernness in a practical, public sphere of work and everyday life. Furthermore, Nagel (2002) observes that some middle-class Middle Easterners, whom she calls the Middle-Class Negotiators, make strategic choices in their day-to-

day behaviors to blend into their surroundings and to accommodate Western, middle-class society. Moreover, as Cainkar (2002) points out, some Middle Easterners and Muslims, in an effort to blend more smoothly into American society, attempted to mask their Middle Eastern identity by changing their names from Muhammad to Mike and from Farouq to Fred and by socializing with mostly non-Middle Easterners. Some Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants will describe their country of origin in ambiguous terms in order to not startle Americans. Kamiar (2007) offers the example of Iranian Americans who, taking advantage of the geographical illiteracy of the general population of Americans, think it is safer to say they are from Persia rather than Iran, hiding their national identity for a greater sense of security in public spaces.

While it is true that many middle- to upper-class Middle Eastern immigrants, especially those who are secular, have a fairly easy time assimilating into American society, it is not the case for all Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants. A survey conducted in 2000 for the National Conference for Community and Justice shows that American Muslims remain unfamiliar to many people in the U.S. (Moore, 2002). Moreover, the survey data shows that Muslims are in limited contact with other Americans and, as a group, are among the most isolated in society and remote in people's feelings (Moore, 2002). As Moore (2002) argues, there is a lack of intergroup and personal relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, and of the intersubjectivity that emerges from such relations. Cainkar (2002) points out, even in the 1990s Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants, even those of the middle classes, believed that the Middle Eastern voice was unwelcomed in American society. Cainkar (2002) offers the example of Chicago, where even highly educated Middle Eastern men and women prefer to work

in small businesses partly as a measure to protect themselves from the pain of interacting with their fellow non-Middle Eastern, non-Muslim Americans.

Cainkar (2002) argues that, due to the inhospitable American society, many Middle Eastern immigrants arriving in the last 40 years and their American-born children developed a range of transnational identities. Some immigrants identify themselves as Arab or Middle Eastern Americans, while some prefer more nationalistic titles such as Palestinian Americans or Jordanian Americans. Nagel (2002) explains, for these immigrants, Arabness represents a set of values, traditions and attitudes that are common to people in the Arab world and that have been passed down over generations. It also signifies a particular world view marked by attachment to family and high regard for hospitality (Nagel, 2002). Furthermore, Nagel (2002) states that some Middle Eastern immigrants do not wish to leave behind their own culture and actually resist assimilation into American society, seeing assimilation as evisceration of their national identity. Therefore, while some Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants believe that by assimilating and remaining invisible they will not be seen as a threat to society and can live their lives without fear of harassment, growing numbers of Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants in all areas of the Western world are now opting to be more visible (Haddad and Smith, 2002). In addition, Cainkar (2002) points out that a major shift in identification, affiliation and behavior occurred among a significant proportion of Middle Eastern Muslim Americans during the 1990s. They began to identify as Muslims first, and Middle Easterners, Arabs, Palestinians or Jordanians second. As part of this, Muslim women who in the 1980s did not cover their hair began to do so. Instead of being a private way of life, Islam became a public way of being (Cainkar, 2002).

## Public Spaces

Social interaction in public spaces can provide opportunities for building bridges, especially between people of different ethnicities. For Jacobs, it was casual contact with people different from oneself which was essential for integration and 'exuberant diversity' (Jacobs, 1961). Cattell et al. (2008) found that public spaces had potential for fostering inter-ethnic understanding by providing opportunities for people to meet, which might not happen in a more organized setting. However, according to Cattell et al. (2008) we cannot assume causal relationships between opportunities for interaction and harmonious social relations because social interaction is socially constructed as well as socially constrained or facilitated. Amin (2002) opines that public spaces may not be the most appropriate locales for generating inter-ethnic understanding. This is partially due to the critique that the notion of 'community' is sometimes based on the exclusion of 'others' (Mitchell, 2000).

Mitchell (2000:215) asserts that "space is the unchanging backdrop against which life is played out". That being said, spaces, or rather public spaces, are a fundamental feature of cities. Ideally, Young (1990) opines, public spaces are places that are accessible to everybody and where difference is encountered and negotiated. They represent sites of sociability and face-to-face interaction. Foucault (1986) sees the world as a place where overlapping 'heterotopias' occur; spaces of multiplicity or spaces of difference**,** that are at once home to opposing performances. Brewer (2005) argues that public spaces can be contested social arenas, sites of division as well as cohesion, of negative as well as positive engagement, and of unequal power relations.

Freeman (2005) argues that notions of public and private spheres have been shown to be overlapping rather than discrete spaces in Western contexts. Public actions can take place in private spaces and vice versa. In addition to purely public spaces such as parks and streets, many Americans now accept shopping centers as the preeminent public spaces of our time, and Zukin (1995) states that many social critics have begun to write about new public spaces formed by the 'transactional space' of telecommunications and computer technology.

Public spaces are not simply physical settings for everyday experiences. They also have various subjective meanings that accumulate over time (Cattell et al., 2008). Spaces can contribute to meeting needs for security, identity, and a sense of place. Cattell et al. (2008) argue that even mundane places can attain symbolic significance for people through social relations that take place there. For some, the environment of familiar streets and neighborhoods, where people are brought together and where friendships and support networks are made, plays a role in one's sense of well-being (Saunders, 1986; Cattel et al., 2008). An example of this would be a busy ethnic shopping street which can provide a supportive environment for recent immigrants who are not confident speaking English. Layard (2005) agrees that our well-being is very closely tied to positive interactions with others in public spaces since social and physical environments do not exist independently of each other. Likewise, Goffman (1963) argues that fleeting, chance or momentary encounters in public spaces are significant in their effects on one's well-being. Cattell et al. (2008) point out that important opportunities for casual interaction, which can lead to perceptions of inclusion and a sense of community, are offered through such local features as street markets, residential squares, sitting-out areas and canal-side walks, or journeys on foot to a school or workplace. In a study by Cattell et al. (2008), it was generally reported that simple public gestures such as nods and smiles were often reassuring and could raise one's spirits; with

the added possibility of marking the beginning of a long-term relationship, and even a community. For a young Pakistani woman in Cattel el al.'s (2008) study whose recent decision to wear a headscarf had led to a number of derogatory comments aimed at her in public, the smiles from familiar strangers relieved stress and made her feel comfortable to be herself out in public.

In addition, social interaction in public spaces can provide relief from daily routines (Cattell et al., 2008). According to Cattell et al. (2008), entering public spaces can be used as an opportunity to escape from the pressures of domestic life, offering as an example a young Pakistani mother in the U.K. who occasionally drove to an out-of-town shopping mall in order to take time out for herself, gaining enjoyment from both visiting the space and her journey to it. Cattell et al. (2008) assert that, for some people, it is the opportunities that public spaces provide as an escape from household routines that attract people to these very public spaces.

While certain public spaces may be appreciated at face value, other spaces may be important to immigrants because they bring to mind other, more distant places, such as an immigrant's country of origin. Cattell et al. (2008) go on to argue that it is through these 'comfort zones' that some immigrants are able to negotiate and make sense of the meaning of 'home', which may now be in the U.S. but is also linked to the immigrant's country of origin. Cattell et al. (2008) found that many first generation Asian research participants described ethnic shopping areas as places that they felt comfortable to use because there were people they identified with, few language barriers and direct reminders of their countries of origin. However, Cattell et al. (2008) found that younger people, including second and third generation Asian research participants were much less interested in these types of places as social spaces. Scopelliti and Guiliani (2004) suggest that the potential for well-being in places can differ

according to the life stage. In their study, Cattel et al. (2008) note a 24-year old Pakistani who said that he might enjoy the social aspects of the ethnic marketplaces and shops in thirty years time, but at this stage in his life he wants to "get away from it".

Zukin (1995) argues that one of the most tangible threats to public culture comes from the politics of everyday fear. While some find interactions with others in public spaces stimulating and emotionally uplifting, others view interactions with strangers in public spaces as threatening. This is partially due to the fact that spaces are experienced in different ways by different people. Furthermore, while public spaces can play a role in encouraging healthy lifestyles or benefiting emotional health, they can also be a source of racism and emotional discomfort. Zukin (1995) argues that the dangers of being in public spaces, such as physical assaults, random violence, hate crimes that target specific groups, serve to destroy the principle of open access. Public spaces, especially urban public spaces, highlight the challenges of negotiating class, gender and ethnic or racial differences placed in close proximity (Amin, 2006). Young (1995) argues that, because anyone can access a truly public space, when one enters the public he or she risks encountering those who are different and those who have different opinions.

A study by Cattell et al. (2008) indicated that, while the social dimensions of public spaces were generally perceived as having a positive impact on well-being, the experience of public space is not always positive. A few recent refugee arrivals in the area of study in the U.K. experienced problems with racism which they believed had a major impact upon their physical and mental health (Cattell et al., 2008). For example, a Black African woman complained of increased back pains and stress as a result of racial harassment from a neighbor (Cattell et al., 2008). The consequent withdrawal into her home also curtailed her ability to establish loose ties

with local people. It seems that racism in public spaces had increased her sense of isolation as well as having a more direct impact on her well-being (Cattell et al., 2008).

## Women in Public Spaces

### *Introduction*

Public space is a place where anyone has a right to come without being excluded because of economic or social conditions. While anyone may have the right to be in public spaces, not everyone feels welcome in public spaces. While I have already discussed the fact that minorities may be unwelcome in public spaces, there is another group that may feel especially uncomfortable in public spaces – women. Mitchell (2000) argues that public space is often highly controlled and surveyed; an exclusionary space in which women are in many ways made unwelcome. The public spaces of the city are seen as masculine and, as Mitchell (2000) notes, some feminists have argued that the very public sphere is predicated on the exclusion of women. It seems that the world is separated into separate spheres for men and women. The man's sphere is the public sphere, the city, a place for public social interaction. The woman's sphere is the private sphere, the home and suburb, a place for domesticity, emotional bonds, and the maintenance of family (Mitchell 2000). Furthermore, women participating in conservative religious denominations may be especially restricted in their public sphere participation, especially those religions where issues regarding women and the family are a major concern (Read, 2004).

According to Kwan (2000), many women are still primarily responsible for most household-serving daily activities that take place outside the home. Because of these

responsibilities, it is necessary for women to occupy public spaces, whether they feel safe in them or not. Kwan (2000) suggests that household-serving tasks dominate the out-of-home activities of women, especially those with young children, and the space-time requirements of these tasks limit their activity space for weekday activities. This gives women with young children fewer options of where to go for certain out-of-home activities, for example, grocery shopping. Rose (1993) argues that time-geography cannot take into account the effect of women's fear of violence or attack in public spaces on their mobility. So for example, if a woman feels safer and generally more comfortable going to a grocery store across town than she does going to the grocery store down the street, because of space-time fixity of child care tasks, she may not have the option of going to the safer grocery store.

*Safety Concerns*

Being a woman in public spaces can be dangerous. Rose (1993) (in Mitchell, 2000:217) quotes June Jordan's argument that there is:

> a universal experience for women, which is that physical mobility is circumscribed by our gender and by the enemies of our gender. This holds throughout the world for women and literally we are not to move about in the world freely. If we do then we have to understand that we must pay for it with our bodies.

Fortunately, increased surveillance of urban consumer spaces provides safety and reassurance for middle-class women, however women's nighttime mobility remains problematic because they fear more for their safety when streets are dark and deserted. Furthermore, women who 'hang-out' in public spaces, rather than quickly moving through for errand-running, are seen by some as asking for trouble. Wilson (1991, in Mitchell 2000:209) argues that the city "offers untrammeled

sexual experience; in the city the forbidden – what is most feared and desired- becomes possible. Woman is present in cities as temptress, as fallen woman, as lesbian…”**.** Mitchell (2000) argues that this is how femininity has been socially constructed in the public spaces of the city and that public space is seen as no place for real and moral women.

## Middle Eastern and Muslim Immigrants in Various Spaces

### *Discrimination in Various Spaces, Including Employment and Educational Spaces*

Abdulhadi (2005) argues that in post-9/11 U.S., many Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans are made to feel foreign at home. While some of the largest U.S. cities advocate multiculturalism, even in these cities Abdulhadi (2005) opines, Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants are still treated as suspicious characters, villains, helpless female victims, and the exotic ‘other’. Many recorded instances of physical and verbal attacks as well as destroying and defacing property of Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants have occurred since 9/11. Such occurrences change the experience of public space for those immigrants living in the U.S. Having such a thing happen can suddenly change what feels like a safe street into a threatening open space. Feagin and Sikes (1994) argue that discrimination in public places may leave a person feeling especially vulnerable. Because it happens in a public place, the space is more open and less protected, the person perpetrating the discrimination can do so quickly and often anonymously, and thus the action can be more severe and dangerous (Feagin and Sikes 1994). So what is it about an immigrant that may trigger a misguided American to take out his or her anger on that immigrant? According to Kayyali (2006), it is possible that religious affiliation in

combination with foreign accent, behavior, or dress may set off these acts of discrimination and hate crimes.

According to Marvasti and McKinney (2004), the interesting thing about discrimination for many Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans is the lengths they must go to in order to ensure that other Americans are comfortable enough not to discriminate against them. For example, immediately after the attacks of 9/11, Somali students in colleges in Minnesota were abused by their American colleagues for being Muslim. The Somali students then felt that it was necessary to organize talks to denounce the terrorist attacks and to let it be known that they were peace-loving people (Fonseka 2002). Likewise, Afzal-Khan (2005) felt the need to organize a 'teach-in' a few weeks after 9/11 at her local library in order to get a dialog going between the Muslims and non-Muslims in her neighborhood regarding their thoughts on 9/11. Many immigrants of Middle Eastern and/or Muslim origins have also taken more passive approaches such as hanging American flags from their homes and/or businesses and even putting American flag stickers on their cars.

Work and educational spaces can be especially problematic for Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants who are discriminated against since they are not places where one can simply get up and leave. Marvasti and McKinney (2004) argue that a recurring problem with being of Middle Eastern or Islamic origins in the workplace that, when professional duties and having to account for oneself coincide, the task of answering for one's ethnic background and religion could become a considerable chore. Furthermore, the *hijab* can be especially problematic in the workplace, possibly even prohibiting the woman wearing it from being able to obtain employment in the first place. Jamal (2005) points out that observing Islamic guidelines – such as not drinking alcohol – may impact work-related functions. Muslims who attend work-

related functions where alcohol is served, but refuse to drink, may be seen by coworkers as 'overly religious' and 'strange', straining relations.

*Ethnic Spaces*

As immigrants of a particular ethnicity transform a neighborhood into an ethnic space, they take ownership and feel more comfortable being themselves in that local place (Ehrkamp, 2005). The established ethnic community, with its ethnic restaurants, grocery stores, coffee houses, bookstores, and mosques is an attractive destination for lower-class, and even some middle-class, ethnic immigrants (Kaya 2005). Because there is a strong association between food, ethnic identity, and language for many Middle Eastern Americans, Middle Eastern restaurants which are patronized by members of the community, and where Middle Eastern music is played, serve sociocultural functions as well as commercial ones (Kayyali 2006). Therefore, restaurants and cafes in particular are social gathering places for immigrants, who congregate for a reminder of home. As Chacko (2003) observed, these ethnic spaces are also good places to form networks to find jobs and places to live. These spaces, where native languages are freely used, provide venues for immigrants to meet one another and also supply information on community events (Chacko 2003). Moreover, Read (2004) points out that Middle Eastern immigrants often move to U.S. ethnic communities for psychological and economic support, maintaining strong attachments to indigenous cultural norms and values and having greater opportunities to meet Middle Eastern friends.

Ehrkamp (2007) argues that, for some Muslim immigrants, the mosque and its religious community play a central role in establishing a sense of home and belonging in the U.S. In addition to worship and Koran instruction, local mosques serve other purposes. Mosques serve

as communal places in which members can socialize, and some even offer homework tutoring and after-school programs for children (Ehrkamp, 2007).

## Female Middle Eastern and Muslim Immigrants in Various Spaces

### *Introduction*

There is not a monolithic female Middle Eastern/Muslim immigrant experience, instead there is much variety. In fact, Middle Eastern and/or Muslim women have a rich diversity of experiences and struggles. Many things such as religiosity, class, and nationality change the experience. For example, a middle class Christian Lebanese woman moving to the U.S. for graduate school is likely to have a different experience than a female Muslim Iraqi refugee who has moved to the U.S. with her family. However, as Abdelrazek (2005:140) argues, "American society tends to lump all women from Muslim countries into the category of 'Arab', and to view all 'Arabs' as 'Muslims', and all Muslims as practicing a particular rigid kind of Islam". Islam is represented as monolithic, and Middle Eastern women, whether Muslims or not, as passive victims of their religion or culture. Furthermore, according to Abdelrazek (2005), the West either ignores or demonizes Middle Eastern and Muslim American women. Middle Eastern women are perceived as either the exotic belly dancer, the terrorist, or the meek and oppressed creature coming from the un/underdeveloped world (Jarmakani, 2005). Stereotyping of the Middle Eastern and/or Muslim woman is nothing new. The view of the Middle Eastern woman as an illiterate, silenced, and oppressed wife covered from head to toe dates back to colonial times.

Because of the stereotypes many Americans hold of Middle Eastern and Muslim women, these groups living in the U.S. complain of having several recurring experiences. Either Americans choose not to see them because they believe they are inferior, that they come from a backward part of the world; or they are stared at in public, even approached by some Americans, as if keeping their eyes on the woman or approaching her in public, asking the woman to account for herself, will keep the woman from carrying out the evil deed she is about to undertake. As Abdelrazek (2005:141) puts it, "I … am tired of the way people gaze at me in the grocery store as if I were an alien coming from a different planet either blindly following my husband who is married to a thousand other wives or hiding grenades in my wide and loose clothes". Furthermore, due to the lack of understanding many Americans have about Middle Eastern and Muslim women, some Americans feel that it is their duty to 'save' these oppressed victims from their men and their religion, even if it means approaching them on the street or in other public places and asking why they doesn't just take off their *hijab*. Middle Eastern women complain of being recipients of the external gaze from the moment they set foot in America, a moment some describe as difficult not just because of the clash of cultures that results from any kind of immigration but because of the stereotypes Middle Eastern women are branded with (Abdelrazek, 2005). Because of stereotypical media images of Middle Eastern and Muslim women, they are put in a position of first having to correct common misunderstandings of Middle Eastern and Muslim womanhood when getting to know a fellow American for the first time, rather than getting the chance to reveal their true selves. As Jarmakani (2005) argues, Middle Eastern and Muslim women are not seen in the U.S. as the thinking, theorizing individuals that they are.

Because many Americans buy into such strong stereotypes of Middle Eastern and Muslim women, when a woman does not fit the stereotype, her fellow Americans may become confused as to what nationality she is. For example, Erakat (2005) argues that non-*hijab*-wearing Middle Eastern and/or Muslim women may be mistaken as Latinas by those who don't know them so well. When one of Erakat's classmates commented to Erakat "I thought you were Latina" (rather than her true Arab background), Erakat asked the classmate why she thought this (Erakat, 2005:208). The classmate's response was, "Because you're loud and outspoken…I always thought Arab women were demure and submissive" (Erakat, 2005:208). Erakat (2005) argues that her classmate's misconceptions are due to her social complicity – mainstream media fed her a line about 'Middle Eastern' women, and the classmate had not bothered to question it.

Not all negative experiences of female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants in public spaces have been as harmless as someone misunderstanding the woman's nationality or asking why they do not take off their headscarf. There has been much more aggressive behavior such as yanking off of headscarves, drivers not stopping for pedestrians wearing headscarves, and even spitting at Middle Eastern and Muslim women. It does appear that many of these more extreme forms of discrimination in public spaces are geared towards women who wear the *hijab*. Mitchell (2000) uses the phrase 'terrorism of travel', as it relates to a black woman moving about in apartheid South Africa or even in the U.S. hooks (1992, in Mitchell, 2000:256-257) states "…to travel, I must always move through fear, confront terror" and "all black people in the United States, irrespective of their class status or politics, live with the possibility that they will be terrorized by whiteness". Mitchell (2000) states that, as a black woman, hooks knows just how much her own travel is circumscribed by the racialized and gendered spaces in which she

must live, work, and move. I argue that the same can be said for female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants, especially those who wear the *hijab*. Kaya (2005) offers the example of a Turkish woman living in the U.S., who wears the *hijab*, who stated that she takes precautions in public for potential discrimination. She says that she cannot just go around freely or comfortably in public. She is always cautious about what is going on around her. If she feels something strange or something suspicious, she will change her route a little bit. Even though the U.S. Census labels those from the Middle East as 'white', they are still seen as 'other' by many Americans. While these groups may not be labeled as a different race by the U.S. Census, they confront race issues just as blacks do.

For female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants in the U.S., mobility may be more limited and/or difficult to negotiate in the U.S. than in their country of origin (Freeman, 2005). This could occur if the immigrant woman does not have other community members to accompany her on public outings, and if she does not speak English (Freeman, 2005). Class and religiosity play significant roles in differences between immigrant women's experiences of safety, freedom, and mobility in the U.S. (Freeman, 2005). American society has different ideas than Middle Eastern society (although beliefs vary from area to area in both societies) about where women belong and where they do not. Traditionally, even in the U.S., private space, especially domestic space, is associated with women, whereas the public domain is a more masculine space. However, Brosseau and Ayari (2005), argue that this type of spatial segregation is especially prevalent in the Arab/Muslim context where private and public spheres are well defined with little overlap between the two. Even though its intensity varies with one's age, family environment, and socioeconomic class, spatial segregation of the genders is

fundamental in shaping a woman's experience of space and place (Brosseau and Ayari, 2005). For some women, home is the only place where they truly belong (Brosseau and Ayari, 2005). Therefore, clashes can occur when immigrants from the Middle East bring with them belief systems from their country of origin. For example, what happens when a female immigrant runs out of baby food while her husband is at work, only she has no one to accompany her to the store? How does she negotiate her belief that she cannot go to the store unaccompanied with the reality that she needs baby food right now? In her country of origin she may have neighbors who are able to accompany her on an errand such as this, however, she may not have this type of support group nearby her new home in the U.S.

Some female Muslim immigrants see their public experiences in the U.S. as being not nearly as difficult as their experiences in the Muslim cities from which they came. For example, Brosseau and Ayari (2005) point out that women who find themselves in the streets of Muslim cities may have to endure aggressive looks and comments from men. Men in these Muslim cities feel that they need to accompany women who need to go outside the home in order to protect 'their honor' (Brosseau and Ayari, 2005). In some Muslim cities, the public domain is a man's domain. You will only see men hanging out, for example, in cafes. Women are in public spaces only out of necessity, to go from one home to another or to run errands and quickly return home (Brosseau and Ayari, 2005). Beaujot (1985) argues that a woman who is being harassed on the street or on a crowded bus of a Muslim city has no recourse, because, in effect, she does not belong there. Therefore, a young woman's experience of the street in a Muslim city is overseen and controlled by men. While Mitchell (2000) argues that public space in the U.S. is often highly controlled and surveyed, and that it is from the start an exclusionary space in which women are in

many ways made unwelcome, this is generally true to a greater extent in Middle Eastern cities than in U.S. cities.

*Attire*

Public spaces can be unwelcoming enough for the average American woman, let alone an immigrant woman who travels about dressed in attire that marks her as 'other' or even seen by some Americans as an enemy of the U.S. This attire may also let those who may be inclined to carry out non-hate related crimes such as muggings know that the woman is likely to be an immigrant, not familiar with U.S. street crime, and therefore an easy target. Therefore, because the *hijab* is a signifier of Islam, women who wear it are singled out for discrimination, harassment, and even hate crimes in the U.S. This produces a conflict of interests because, for the more orthodox, the meaning of Muslimness has been linked to the adoption of a more explicitly Islamic dress in the form of the *hijab* (Dwyer 1999). Therefore veiling, while meant to take attention away from the woman's body, actually dramatically raises the visibility of women who choose to wear it in the U.S. (Haddad and Smith, 2002; Kayyali 2006). The *hijab* has become a recognizable marker of difference.

Veiling means different things to different people. Muslim women who identify with contemporary Islamist movements follow the ideology that veiling enables them to participate, and be protected, in the public sphere (Haddad and Smith, 2002). Franks (2000) argues that the *hijab* as a garment offers a Muslim woman the means to move between the private and public spheres and to be a spectator in the public world of men. Therefore, rather than the wearing of *hijab* serving to exclude Muslim women from the public domain, it actually allows them a way to enter the public domain (Franks, 2000). Interestingly, where a woman in an Islamic country

could be criticized for wearing too little, Muslim women in Western society may be belittled for wearing too much (Franks, 2000). Western society expects women to define themselves in specific ways. Most of all, according to Franks (2000), Western society requires that women be the object of the gaze. However, it is difficult for a woman to be the object of the gaze, to be objectified, when she is covered from head to toe. In a sense the woman, free from being surveilled, is able to become the spectator with free access to gaze upon men. This gaze reversal may produce a sense of discomfort for those in Western society who have always been the subject rather than the object of the gaze.

For other Middle Eastern and Muslim women, despite a deep sense of pride and cultural difference, there is a strong desire to fit in and be viewed as 'the same' within Western society (Nagel 2002). These women will not usually dress in Muslim attire, but wear typical Western fashions. Furthermore, some women who normally do wear the *hijab* will forego it if they travel outside of their Muslim communities. Therefore, these women are not as likely to face the more extreme forms of discrimination in public spaces as the more orthodox women.

*Compliance with the Muslim Community*

Mohammad (2005) points out that, in Islamic discourses, women's bodies are seen as endangering their own sexual purity, a key component of marriage and the formation of Muslim families. Furthermore, Badran (1995) and Mernissi (1975) argue that, in Islamic discourse, women are seen as 'naturally' sexually provocative, being associated with *fitna* (chaos) in Islamic society, and therefore must be kept separate from unrelated men, being restricted to domestic spaces. Afzal-Khan (2005) opines that there seems to be an obsession with Muslim women's bodies as markers of familial and societal honor.

According to Islamic discourse, if the woman is to move from the domestic sphere to a public, masculine space, the head and body must be covered, containing the woman's sexuality. Many Americans don't understand why the hair must be covered. As Mohammad (2005) states, this is because hair is regarded as being as sexually enticing as the body, forming part of what the Quran refers to as women's 'ornaments' that they must hide from the gaze of unrelated men. Thus, prior to entering a public space, a woman must actually create a private space around her body and hair by covering it, thereby desexualizing herself (Mohammad, 2005). This idea may prove to be problematic for Muslim immigrants in Western societies. This is due to the fact that, as Mohammad (2005) points out, in Western society, there are no state regulations prohibiting and policing relations between men and women in keeping with the requirements of certain Muslim communities. In addition, while there is a community framework of surveillance in Muslim societies, it is lacking in Western society (Mohammad, 2005). This is not to say that community surveillance of Middle Eastern and Muslim women does not exist in Western society, for it does, it is simply a more difficult undertaking in Western society. However, according to Nagel (2005), more than ever, Muslim women living in Western societies are subjected to constant scrutiny by their 'community'. As the 'community' sees it, certain public spaces are viewed as dangerous for women to occupy, danger that can be minimized in many instances through community norms of appropriate female dress. According to the 'community' spaces can be seen in terms of transparent and opaque spaces – the former referring to public spaces within which 'community' members can monitor women's behavior and the later referring to public space that makes monitoring more difficult (Dwyer 1999; Mohammad 2005). Mohammad (2005:383) argues:

> For the ‘community’, dangerous spaces are not only the dark alleyways that may characterize general fears about women’s safety in public spaces but well-lit ‘unregulated’ spaces that might be considered ‘safe’ for women by the wider white ‘community’, such as the high street, certain spaces of the education system, and the labor market. According to many women of Middle Eastern and Islamic descent, ‘community’ norms construct these spaces as offering dangerous possibilities for sexual immorality, social mobility, and financial independence for women.

In a survey conducted by Mohammad (2005) which was given to young British Pakistani Muslim women, she found that many respondents agreed with another respondent’s claim that it is seen as wrong to hang out around town because there are men hanging out there as well. Therefore, being seen in a place considered morally inappropriate for women jeopardizes a woman’s reputation, affecting both her prospects for marriage and the honor of her family (Freeman, 2005). This can be problematic for the female immigrant who wishes to negotiate Middle Eastern and Islamic culture with school, employment, and American culture.

Middle Eastern and/or Muslim women must fight two very different fights in the same public space. As Abdelrazek (2005) sees it, female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants must not only resist Orientalist views of women, but they also have to resist Islamic fundamentalists who misinterpret the Islamic religion to serve their own patriarchal interests and who see women’s bodies as a symbol of procreation and communal dignity to be manipulated and its activities codified. In other words, there are two ways that female Middle Eastern immigrants must negotiate space; one is so as not to feel threatened by certain Americans in public spaces and the other is, if the woman is Muslim, so as to comply with the norms of Islam and the community (Mohammad 2005). As Malek (2005:170) states**,** “In the Arab-American/

private sphere, we were guarding against an assault on our humanity as women. In the greater-American/public sphere, we were guarding against an assault on our humanity as Arabs."

# CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

## Importance of the Project

Public consciousness of a large Muslim presence in the U.S. began with the first Iraq War in the 1990s and reached its peak in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11 (Rose 2006). Since 9/11 there have been problems with discrimination- including derogation, denial, and aggression- against immigrants and citizens of Middle Eastern and Islamic origins. While the experiences of female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants and citizens who wear the *hijab* in the West have been previously explored, research has not yet been conducted explicitly on the public experiences of female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants in the Atlanta, Georgia area. This research also goes beyond much of the existing research by examining both women who wear the *hijab* as well as those who dress in 'Western' style attire. This study explores the everyday experiences of female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants within various public spaces and draws attention to the 'othering' of female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants in American society. While 'public space' is classically defined as a place where anyone has a right to be, without exclusions due to economic or social conditions, this study also includes semi-public spaces, such as shopping centers, as well as employment and educational spaces.

A primary goal of this study is to capture the voices and perceptions of female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants in the Atlanta, Georgia area. Secondly, this research may be referenced by newcomers of Middle Eastern and/or Islamic origins in order to gain knowledge as to which spaces they can expect to travel about with minimal discrimination in the Atlanta, Georgia area, and which spaces they may wish to avoid due to other immigrants' negative

experiences in those spaces. While research participants did not always agree on which spaces they felt comfortable in, there were some types of spaces that were named by many as places considered enjoyable to be in, with little or no harassment. Likewise, there was some disagreement as to which spaces produced discomfort in research participants, however, this study will discuss those spaces that were mentioned repeatedly. While many new immigrants will have connections to the 'community', which will suggest where and where not to go, this research can provide additional assistance.

## Atlanta's Middle Eastern and Muslim Communities

Atlanta's Middle Eastern community is made up of individuals from all parts of the Middle East, including North African countries. The largest group is Lebanese, followed by Palestinians and Syrians. According to educational literature produced by the Alif Institute, a local Arab organization, nearly 25,000 persons of Arab descent live in Georgia. Of those, approximately 15,000 reside in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Furthermore, it is estimated that close to 10,000 Iranian Americans and approximately 2,000 Turkish Americans reside in the Atlanta area. However, precise statistics on these communities are not available, and estimates of size vary widely. One reason for this is that many persons from the Middle East fall into the census category of 'white', and therefore a specific ethnic distinction is not made, possibly leaving many people of Middle Eastern origins unaccounted for. Furthermore, census data is not collected on religion, and so it is also difficult to get a count of Muslims in the Atlanta area. For the most part, immigrants from the Middle East living in the Atlanta metropolitan statistical area reside in communities throughout northern and eastern Atlanta. The Arab Americans in Atlanta

have never made an ethnic enclave for themselves, unlike other ethnic communities such as Hispanics or Asians. Likewise, Arab Americans are not well represented in the large multicultural area of Atlanta known as Buford Highway (Walcott, 2002). Many Arab Americans have chosen homes based on safety, schools, and shopping. Furthermore, many are highly educated and occupy the middle and upper middle class socioeconomic strata.

Schools and classes are offered at various locations. Al-Farooq Masjid offers religious instruction for adults, a children's weekend Islamic school, and an early morning school where children memorize the Quran. The Atlanta Masjid of Al-Islam runs an elementary school and high school which together form the second largest Islamic educational facility in the U.S. The Alif Institute offers Arabic language classes as well as lectures, conferences and workshops relating to the peoples and cultures of the Arab world and Arab Americans. Likewise, the Persian Community Center offers Farsi language classes and Persian music classes.

Middle Eastern and Islamic newspapers, magazines, books and videos are available at such places as Al-Farooq Masjid, The Islamic Book Center and various Middle Eastern groceries and import stores, such as International Groceries and Delicatessen, Leon International Foods, Shahrzad International, Georgia Halal Meat, and S.K Grocery store. There are quite a few Middle Eastern restaurants in the Atlanta area such as Lawrence's Café, Nicola's, The Imperial Fez, and Persepolis. Belly dancing may be seen at most of the above mentioned restaurants, and it is not uncommon to see people of Middle Eastern descent get up to dance with the belly dancer, as this is a way of expressing appreciation and joy in the culture. Furthermore, the Lebanese Dance Troupe can be seen at various ethnic festivals throughout the year. The Persian Community Center offers concerts and Persian dance discos which are usually advertised by flyers in Persian grocery stores and restaurants. There are various festivals and special events

during different times of the year, including the Persian New Year Celebration, the Mideastern Festival, and the Turkish Festival. Additionally, Middle Eastern film festivals are held yearly at Georgia State University and the High Museum.

There are a number of Arab organizations in Georgia. These groups are educational, charitable, cultural, political, or business related in nature. In addition, many national Arab organizations have chapters in Atlanta. These organizations serve to promote an understanding and appreciation of the Arab people and culture, and Arab Americans in general. Members of Arab organizations are eager to include the general population in their many social gatherings, cultural events, festivals and holiday celebrations. There are also more specialized Middle Eastern organizations such as The American Druze Society, The Cedar Club of Atlanta, The National Alliance of Lebanese Americans, the Palestinian Human Rights Campaign, the Persian Community Center, and the Turkish American Cultural Association.

Another way the Middle Eastern community comes together is through worship. There are a variety of churches and mosques, including St. Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church, St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church, and Briarlake Arabic Baptist Church. Local Arab churches were founded by the early Arab community in Atlanta and feature Arab cultural festivals, Arab dance groups and religious services in Arabic. In addition, there are presently just over 30 mosques in the Atlanta metropolitan statistical area serving immigrant Muslims who come from at least 80 countries. Al-Farooq Masjid, which has the largest membership of any Atlanta mosque, was founded primarily by Pakistani and Arab Muslim immigrants beginning in the late 1970s. Those who formed Al-Farooq were Muslims who lived in the area around Georgia Tech for whom travel to other Masjids was a burden. Many participants at Al-Farooq continue to come from

Table 2-1. Middle Eastern and Muslim Organizations in Georgia (Non-exhaustive)

| Organization | Brief Description |
|---|---|
| Alif Institute/ Arab American Fund of Georgia | Education, cultural, arts and enrichment center |
| American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee | Grassroots civil rights organization |
| The American Druze Society | Perpetuate the universal teachings of the Druze faith through education, research, and charitable work |
| American-Turkish Friendship Council | Cultural awareness and knowledge, business connections, humanitarian efforts |
| Arab American Women's Society of Georgia | Educational and cultural organization |
| The Cedar Club of Atlanta | Educational, spiritual, social organization |
| Council on American-Islamic Relations | Advocate for justice and mutual understanding |
| Georgia Islamic Institute | Religious, moral and intellectual training of American Muslims |
| Istanbul Center | Education, culture, dialogue and humanitarian works |
| Middle East Socio-Political Association | Addresses cultural and political issues |
| The National Alliance of Lebanese Americans | Education and humanitarian assistance |
| The National Arab-American Medical Association | Educational, cultural, and charitable events as well as sponsors national and international medical conventions |
| Palestinian Human Rights Campaign | Issues related to the struggle of the Palestinian people |
| Persian Community Center | Provide and preserve cultural values and standards |
| Student Associations | Muslim and Middle Eastern associations for students attending various Georgia colleges and universities |
| Turkish American Cultural Association | Educational, cultural and social activities |

Georgia Tech. In addition, Emory Muslims have introduced lasting traditions on Emory's campus, including the Islamic Art Gala and the weekly call to prayer or '*adhan*' that rings from the Bell Tower every Friday of Ramadan (the holy month for Muslims). The latter tradition, initiated in 2001, was the first of its kind in the U.S. and proudly proclaims the presence of

Muslims on Emory's campus. For more than three minutes, the call to prayer is audible to the whole university and beyond. Encouraged by such public recognition, Muslims are hoping that other institutions will make similar gestures to acknowledge the presence of Islam in America (Haddad and Smith, 2002).

There are a number of Muslim and/or Middle Eastern refugees located in the Atlanta area. From 1996 to 2001, more than 19,000 refugees were resettled in Georgia, many in Clarkston, a once mostly white town about 12 miles outside of Atlanta, or in surrounding Dekalb County. In Clarkston, as many as half of the current residents are refugees from war-torn countries around the world. Many of these refugees are Muslim, and some are Middle Eastern. They come from more than 50 countries including Afghanistan, Bosnia, Burundi, Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Gambia, Iraq, Kosovo, Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan. They are placed by resettlement agencies in the area, where they receive 90 days of assistance from the government and then are left to fend for themselves. These resettlement agencies are key players in easing immigrants' absorption into the host society. Because of the resettlement programs in Clarkston, this area has become one of the most diverse in America. The transformation of Clarkston began in the late 1980s, when resettlement agencies decided Clarkston was perfect for refugees to begin new lives due to its availability of housing, good public transportation, and proximity to employment prospects in Atlanta. There is a local mosque in Clarkston which serves the Muslim refugees, drawing more than 800 to Friday prayers. In addition, local churches facing declining memberships have been willing to reach out to sponsor immigrant resettlement in the Clarkston area in order to fill pews (Walcott, 2002). Previous studies have found that, as surrounding communities and businesses grow to meet the demands of newly arrived immigrants, urban space becomes culturally

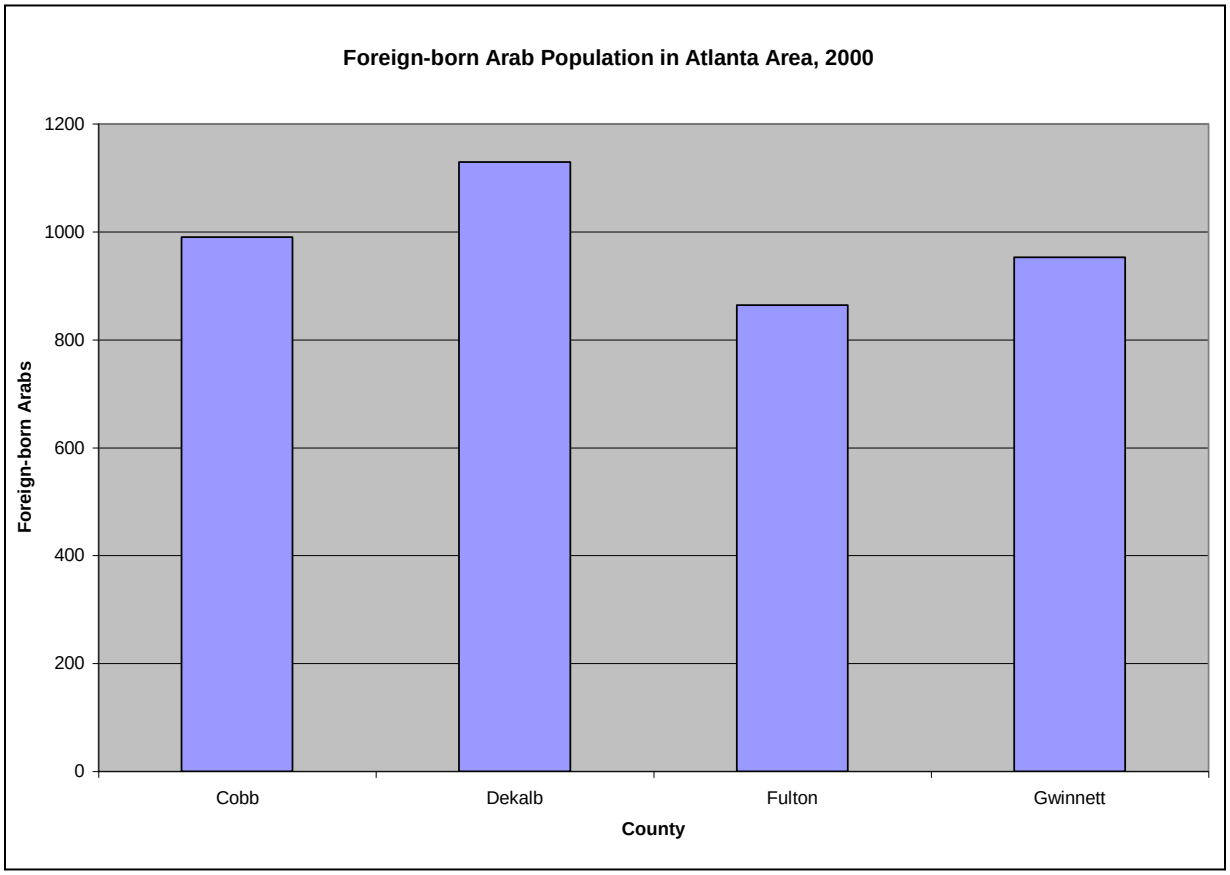


Figure 2-1. Foreign-born Arab Population in Atlanta Area
Source: U.S. Census, 2000

transformed. Clarkston is no different. Because of its large refugee population, Clarkston is now dotted with ethnic restaurants and other ethnic-owned businesses.

The refugees have not always gotten a warm welcome from the original residents of Clarkston. There have been problems with racial epithets being hurled at these refugees from some whites in the area who are unhappy with the presence of the refugees in Clarkston, and some refugees have even complained that they have been harassed by police officers in the area. St. John (2007) recounts, at a town meeting in 2003 to foster understanding between the refugees

and residents, the first question, submitted on an index card, was, “What can we do to keep the refugees from coming to Clarkston?”.

## Attire

It seems that dress is the predominant marker used within American society to identify Muslims. Dwyer (1999) states that, for the more orthodox, the meaning of Muslimness has been linked to the adoption of a more explicitly Islamic dress in the form of the *hijab*. *Hijab* is modest dress for women, which most Islamic legal systems define as covering everything except the face and hands in public. Therefore, one of the basic assumptions underlying this research is that the experiences of female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants in non-domestic spaces are at least partly determined by attire. Because the *hijab* is a signifier of Islam, women who wear it are singled out for discrimination. In addition, this study discusses other qualities besides the wearing of the *hijab* that mark a female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrant as ‘other’ and motivate some misguided Americans to discriminate against her.

## Participant Recruitment

In order to identify subjects for this project, the names of several gatekeepers to the local Middle Eastern and Muslim communities were obtained from Alta Schwartz, the Outreach Director of the Middle East Institute at Georgia State University, as well as a friend of mine who has contacts in the Middle Eastern community. Some of the gatekeepers were heavily involved

in various Arab and/or Muslim organizations. As well, they were of various religious backgrounds (including non-practicing), ages, and countries of origin. Starting with the gatekeepers, I was able to secure a number of interviews using the snowball method, a technique in which existing research participants identify additional people to be included in the study (Dunn, 2000). Since a potential barrier to truly representative research is the fact that it is difficult to get some groups to participate in research projects because of their anxieties about their personal safety, the strength of the snowball technique, as Valentine (1997) points out, is that it helps researchers to gain the trust of potential research participants. Additionally, several contacts were obtained from women whom I work with in a local Persian restaurant. Valentine (1997) argues that one must be sure to use multiple initial contact points when you begin the snowballing process to ensure that all informants are not like-minded.

While the initial gatekeepers proved to be very helpful in the recruitment of participants, in order to maximize diversity an attempt was made at recruiting research participants from other sources as well. This was not always an easy-going process. Many directions were taken, many inquiries made, and many hours were spent on the telephone attempting to recruit participants. Towards the beginning of the search for research participants, one woman who refused to interview said that the questionnaire was too intrusive, that Middle Eastern women did not like to answer such personal questions about themselves, and that perhaps the questionnaire should be rewritten to be less personal, and more vague. Since this suggestion, while appreciated, did not serve the purposes of this study, the advice was not heeded and the search continued for potential subjects who did not feel that the questionnaire was too intrusive. Eventually, a number of women were found who were interested in discussing their experiences.

Once contact names were obtained, a preliminary phone conversation or email quickly established whether potential research participants were interested and able to interview. This was followed by an email with more information about the project, including the questions that would be asked of the research participants. This was done to alleviate any anxiety the research participants may have had about interviewing.

## Research Participants

Primary research took place during Summer and Fall of 2008. Research participants were female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants living in the Atlanta area. Since there was a deliberate attempt to maximize the diversity of research participants, backgrounds of subjects chosen vary by religion, socioeconomic status, country of origin, and reason for migration. Countries of origin include China (Taiwan), Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Palestinian territories, and Syria. The age range of subjects is 24-65 years old. Research participants reside in various areas of the Atlanta metropolitan statistical area. Participants were not compensated for their time. Arrangements were made to meet research participants at agreed-upon locations that were convenient for them, including homes, coffee shops, various Middle Eastern restaurants, and in organizations, including a local Arab organization, as well as a local Islamic Center.

Obtaining interviews from immigrants from the lower classes, including refugees, was problematic. One barrier was the refusal of the directors of several refugee resettlement agencies to allow interviewing of the refugees they serve, stating that they were protecting the refugees. A director of one resettlement agency explained that the refugees had recently undergone, and in

some cases continue to undergo, traumatic experiences. Therefore to allow a stranger access to the refugees in order to ask intrusive questions was considered by the agency to be unethical. Furthermore, after consultation with an expert on the local Middle Eastern community, it was determined that approaching women at farmer's markets, in mosques, or on the street would likely create a threatening environment for them and not produce reliable data. Another barrier to the recruitment of refugees was the fact that a commitment of at least 45 minutes was needed from research participants with very good English skills. The time commitment would be much greater for women who did not possess good English skills, a category which many refugee women fall into. Therefore, the possibility of approaching refugee women on the street or in the market and obtaining the necessary time commitment from them on-the-spot seemed unlikely.

During the search for research participants I ended up doing, and continue to do, volunteer work for one of the refugee resettlement agencies in Clarkston, Georgia, serving as an English tutor to a female refugee from Iraq. At first, I hoped that an interview for the research project would result from the volunteer work. However, I have come to be considered a close and trusted friend by the family, even being invited to family birthday parties and asked by the husband to watch over his family while he made a month-long trip to Iraq. Therefore, I was uncomfortable changing our relationship from a trusted friendship into a researcher/human subject relationship.

It was much easier to recruit participants when I went from attempting to video and/or audio tape the interviews to simple note-taking during the interviews. My initial experiences attempting to record interviews confirmed Dunn's (2000) argument that recorders may sometimes inhibit a participant's responses or desire to participate altogether because the tape recorder serves as a reminder of the formal situation of the interview. Likewise, participants may

feel particularly vulnerable because someone might recognize their voice if the recording was to be aired publicly (Dunn, 2000). This may lead to the participant being less forthcoming than they would have been if note-taking had been used.

## Qualitative Research

This research is qualitative. Qualitative methods have been used to verify, analyze, interpret and understand human behavior of all types. Winchester (2000) argues that qualitative methods have been used to reveal that which has previously been considered unknowable – feelings, emotions, attitudes, perceptions, and cognition. As researchers, we are usually resource-limited, both in terms of time and money, and we must make decisions about what/who to include and what/who to exclude from our study. We must decide how many people to talk with and how many texts to read. Dowling (2000) argues that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry; sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources. Dowling (2000) goes on to observe that the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with information-richness and the analytical capacities of the researcher than with sample size. For this particular research project, 24 female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants were interviewed. This number of interviews is statistically significant while providing some variety in responses.

Semi-structured interviews were used, taking an average time of 45 minutes to one hour to complete, although some interviews went on for several hours. Bernard (1994) opines that a

semi-structured interview is a good choice because when the questions are more private and threatening, a greater response is attributed to open-ended questions because people seem to feel less threatened when they can offer their own answers. Additionally, Bernard (1994) argues for the importance of semi-structured interviewing because it demonstrates some control and competency while simultaneously demonstrating that you are not trying to exercise excessive control over the research participant. This is one way of developing rapport with the participant, enabling the researcher to gain their trust and confidence, and prompting the research participant to reveal information they would otherwise not have disclosed. The use of questionnaires while interviewing is a good choice because they have numerous benefits, including the removal of interviewer bias by providing each participant with the same set of questions (Bernard 2002). Prearranged topics covered on the questionnaire included migration history, attire, travel patterns, work/school experiences, and public experiences. This method allowed reliable, comparable data to be collected due to its overall consistency.

## Researcher Positioning

It is important to acknowledge the ways in which the researcher's positioning structures the research; in my case as a white, non-Muslim woman. Dwyer (1999) asserts that, with one-to-one interviews, there are possibilities of acquiring only a superficial understanding of the research participant, as well as reinforcing dominant power relations. Interviewing in different cultural contexts requires a heightened sensitivity to the complex power relations which exist between researchers and interviewees (Valentine, 1997). With one-to-one interviews it is possible for subjects to see the researcher as a person of authority and answer interview questions

according to what they believe the researcher wants to hear. Moreover, Manning (1967) argues that interviews actually help to create meanings that seemingly reside within respondents. Because of this, respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Pool (1957) sees the interview as a drama between the interviewer and the interviewee. Collecting and interpreting social information involves personal interactions, and interactions between two or more individuals always occur in a societal context (Dowling, 2000). Societal and individual expectations, as well as structures of power influence the nature of those interactions (Dowling, 2000).

The researcher should try to become aware of the nature of his or her involvement in the interview, and the influence of social relations. The researcher's ability to interpret information obtained during the interview also depends on his or her own characteristics. As such, there is a debate about the pros and cons of being an 'insider' versus an 'outsider' (Dowling, 2000). An insider is someone who possesses many of the same qualities as the research participant, while an outsider differs substantially from the research participant. As a white, non-immigrant academic interviewing migrant women, I am considered an outsider in my research. One position in the debate is that as an insider both the information you collect and your interpretations of it are more valid than those of an 'outsider' (Dowling, 2000). People are more likely to speak their minds more freely, and you are more likely to understand the meaning behind what they are saying because you share the same experiences as they do. It may be more difficult to establish good rapport with a research participant if you are not both members of the same social group. However, another position in the debate holds that being an outsider can bring benefits to the research (Dowling, 2000). Being an outsider may mean that research participants make more of

an effort to clearly articulate their feelings and ideas and to make sure the researcher really understands what they are trying to convey. Dowling (2000) concludes that a researcher is never simply either an insider or an outsider. We all possess overlapping characteristics in at least some areas, whether they are racial, socioeconomic, gender, ethnic, etc. Indeed, becoming aware of some of these similar qualities as well as discrepancies can be a learning opportunity for the researcher.

## Presentation of Self

Researchers have always encountered the barriers of difference between themselves and those they research (Lofland 1995). As such, in order to gain respect as a researcher, I needed to make an effort to neither be nor appear to be Orientalist. Edward Said (1978) states that Orientalism situates the 'other' in the Western experience, thereby allowing the 'other' to be represented by Western ideas of who he or she is. As well, to combat the stigma of an investigator, Lofland (1995) argues that researchers need to develop their own interviewing style, one that is appropriate to the situation. The interviewing style is part role-playing, but not to the effect of misleading or unethical deception (Rotsos 2002). The researcher, while role-playing, must still be genuine, otherwise research participants become suspicious. Role-playing is simply applying the right manner of inquiry and common sense in a given situation (Rotsos 2002).

## Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I prepared myself to answer questions as well as ask them. I understood that it was possible that research participants viewed my probing of their lives and experiences with suspicion, possibly feeling that I meant to do them harm with the information I was collecting. Therefore, I made a conscious effort to make the research participants feel comfortable about answering my questions and comfortable with my intentions for the information I was collecting. Likewise, I had to consider the possible ways the data I had collected could be misused, and put appropriate precautions in place. For example, completed questionnaires did not contain names of the research participants, only a number that corresponded to a list of research participants which was kept in a locked office file. In addition, pseudonyms have been used in the final product for the protection of the research participants.

## Observations and Other Limitations

I had the distinct feeling that some research participants did not trust me, for I could see the look of suspicion in their eyes. One participant told me that she knew of another researcher who interviewed Arabs and Middle Easterners but then used the information against them rather than to benefit them. In addition, there were several instances during the interview when she would respond to a question but then tell me not to print her response. However, towards the end of the interview, I felt that she was much more open, even offering unsolicited information about herself. I am unsure as to whether or not this particular respondent gave ‘complete’ responses during the first half of the interview, however, I felt that responses were

more thorough during the last half of the interview. This underscores the idea that the beginning of the interview should consist of questions that serve to build rapport, and that the more sensitive questions, the 'meat' of the study, should be saved until the end of the interview. Perhaps in some cases making time when first meeting a participant to in order to get to know each other would be beneficial to getting more complete responses. In general, I believe that most non-Western peoples appreciate a slower pace, and getting to know someone a little better before giving personal information about themselves. However, I believe this is not what all research participants want. Some participants were not interested in getting to know me beforehand over a cup of tea or coffee. It was apparent that that these participants were busy and wanted to get the interview over with. Therefore, accommodating each interviewee's needs is a complex yet critical component of the interview process, and having the ability to 'read' people, or even simply asking respondents what they need if that seems appropriate, is a good research skill.

Some respondents, while it did not seem that there were rapport issues, appeared to want to 'get it over with'. Therefore, I have doubts as to how complete their responses were. With two research participants in particular, even though they were referred by a fellow mosque attendant and they were willing to do the interview, it seemed that rapport was not established during any time of the interview process. These two participants were interviewed together with another woman, the other woman being much more responsive than these two. While both participants spoke English, during the interview they continuously spoke to each other in their native Pakistani language. It was apparent that they were asking each other, instead of me as was instructed, about the interview questions, and neither seemed to be giving complete information. This group of respondents was interviewed during Ramadan and had been fasting

all day. Perhaps the fact that the interviews were scheduled just before dinnertime, and that the women were probably hungry, had an effect on their demeanor!

As for most participants, the fact that their friends or colleagues had referred me seemed to be enough for them to open up right from the beginning. Some participants were excited about sharing their experiences with me, and were very interested in assisting me in locating other research participants. Some participants stated that they felt this study would benefit the community and were more than willing to help out in any way they could.

Since research participants were part of a 'sensitive group', namely Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants, I was always sure to tell them at the beginning of an interview that they did not have to answer any question that they did not feel comfortable answering (a requirement of the Institutional Review Board). As for the participants who seemed distrustful of me, I did not always feel comfortable asking for more thorough responses than what they were willing to give at first, fearing that they might think that I was getting too personal and begin to question my motives. Therefore, I did not always get detailed responses, which I believe would have made the research more valuable.

## Data Analysis

After completing all of the interviews, transcripts of the interviews were then typed up to facilitate analysis. I used a coding system to sort and retrieve data. Once the sections of all the interviews were coded, it was possible to retrieve all similarly coded sections. These sections of text were compiled and re-read as a single file. Dunn (2000:77) states, "This allows

the researcher to grasp the varying opinions on different issues and to begin to unravel the general feeling about an issue”. The following categories were used for the coding system:

1. Scrutiny
2. Violence, discrimination, defamation, and intolerance
3. Hyper visibility / invisibility
4. Racism
5. Cultural alienation and conflict
6. Association and participation in the host society and sharing values of the dominant classes
7. Work opportunities
8. Encountering Orientalist conceptions, stereotypes and biased media coverage
9. Negative experiences based on class and religiosity
10. Going to great lengths in order to make sure Americans are comfortable
11. The ethnic community
12. Mosques play a role in establishing a sense of home in the U.S.
13. Experiencing special caring and protection from persons outside of the communities
14. Public spaces as places of fear and insecurity
15. Women and minorities can be made to feel unwelcome in public spaces
16. A greater percentage of Muslims as opposed to non-Muslims have experienced discrimination since 9/11
17. Profiling at places such as work, airports, schools and by immigration officials
18. Work places can be problematic, also work-related functions can be an issue
19. Women from many parts of the world feel that they have more opportunities in the U.S. than in country of origin
20. Women who wear *hijab* are singled out for discrimination
21. Muslim women feel the need to comply with the norms of the community
22. Experiences in urban versus rural areas

# CHAPTER 3: DATA FINDINGS

## Demographic Profile

Twenty four female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants were interviewed and their responses analyzed. Thus, in this chapter, 24 respondents will be discussed. The questionnaire, which is discussed in Chapter Two, is shown in the Appendix. The first group of questions were demographic in nature and were designed to put the later questions into context, as well as to build a level of comfort between myself and the participants before I moved on to the more delicate questions. I wanted to obtain information about the respondents, such as why they moved to the U.S., where they reside in the Atlanta area, religion practiced, and socioeconomic class in order to situate their responses in the later questions pertaining to their experiences in public spaces.

The age range of the respondents was 24-65 years. Since two respondents did not wish to give their ages, a statistically correct estimate of ages cannot be given. However, a rough estimate of the average age of respondents is around 41 years. While all respondents reside in various parts of the Metropolitan Atlanta area (see Table 3-1), the majority of respondents live in suburban areas north of the city proper, with more respondents claiming residence in Alpharetta, followed by Sandy Springs, than any other area. This is most likely due to the fact that over one quarter of the respondents were interviewed in a mosque located in Alpharetta which they regularly attend. Furthermore, the fact that the snowball method was used to recruit participants most likely led to the fact that most respondents live in the same general areas.

Table 3-1. Where Respondents Reside in the Atlanta Area

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Acworth | 1 | 4 |
| Alpharetta | 7 | 29 |
| Atlanta | 1 | 4 |
| Buckhead | 2 | 8 |
| Cumming | 2 | 8 |
| Duluth | 2 | 8 |
| East Cobb | 1 | 4 |
| Kennesaw | 1 | 4 |
| Marietta | 2 | 8 |
| Peachtree City | 1 | 4 |
| Sandy Springs | 3 | 13 |
| Tucker | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

Respondents have resided in the Atlanta area anywhere from 1½ to 35 years, with the average time in Atlanta being 14 years (see Table 3-2). Some respondents lived in other parts of the U.S. prior to moving to Atlanta.

Table 3-2. Respondents' Length of Residence in the Atlanta Area

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 1 to 5 years | 6 | 25 |
| 6 to 10 years | 4 | 17 |
| 11 to 15 years | 6 | 25 |
| 16 to 20 years | 2 | 8 |
| 21 to 25 years | 3 | 13 |
| 26 to 30 years | 1 | 4 |
| 31 to 35 years | 2 | 8 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

When asked why they moved to the U.S. (see Table 3-3), fully one-half of the respondents moved to the U.S. to be with their husbands, followed by 21% who moved to the U.S. as children with their families.

Table 3-3. Reasons Why Respondents Moved to the U.S.

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| To be with husband | 12 | 50 |
| As a child (with family) | 5 | 21 |
| For a better life/ job | 3 | 13 |
| For a better education | 2 | 8 |
| To leave a bad political situation in home country | 2 | 8 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

As Table 3-4 shows, respondents have moved to the U.S. from 11 different countries of origin. More respondents were from Pakistan than anywhere else, followed by Syria.

Table 3-4. Respondents' Countries of Origin

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Egypt | 2 | 8 |
| Eritrea | 1 | 4 |
| Iran | 2 | 8 |
| Iraq | 2 | 8 |
| Israel | 2 | 8 |
| Jordan | 1 | 4 |
| Lebanon | 2 | 8 |
| Pakistan | 5 | 21 |
| Palestine | 2 | 8 |
| Syria | 4 | 17 |
| Taiwan, R.O.C. | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

The majority of respondents stated that they were practicing Muslims (see Table 3-5). The majority of respondents described their standard of living as middle class, with no respondents describing their standard of living as below middle class (see Table 3-6).

Table 3-5. Respondents' Religions

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Christian | 3 | 12 |
| Christian, non- practicing | 1 | 4 |
| Muslim | 17 | 71 |
| Muslim, non- practicing | 3 | 12 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

While respondents were not explicitly asked about their educational attainment, most respondents mentioned having degrees, with some having advanced degrees, while some respondents were in the process of obtaining a degree. Other respondents mentioned coming to the U.S. to be with their husbands who moved here for advanced degrees. Most of the respondents have jobs where they work with other Americans, and all except one said there were no restrictions placed on them by family members as to where they may visit or travel.

Table 3-6. Respondents' Socioeconomic Class

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Middle Class | 14 | 58 |
| Somewhat Above Middle Class | 9 | 38 |
| Greatly Above Middle Class | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

The majority of respondents described their typical attire as Western style, meaning they dress the same as most American women, while seven wore the *hijab* and one respondent (a Pakistani woman) dressed in shalwar qameez with dupatta (see Table 3-7). Several of the younger respondents reported that, out of respect, they dressed more modestly if attending a community function or if visiting older members of the community. Likewise, some respondents who did not typically wear the *hijab* reported wearing it when going to mosque out of respect for the holy place and following Islamic guidelines for a place of worship.

Table 3-7. Respondents' Typical Attire

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Hijab | 7 | 29 |
| Western Attire | 16 | 67 |
| Shalwar/Qameez/Dupatta | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

Orientalist Conceptions, Stereotypes and Biased Media Coverage

Respondents must counter Orientalist conceptions, stereotypes and negative effects of biased media coverage. Aisha, a non-practicing Muslim who moved to the U.S. from Lebanon as a child, stated that, while attending a local university, "a white guy asked me and my Iranian friend where we were from and wanted to know which one would blow him up faster". She says she wasn't offended, but was disappointed because "he was so ignorant". Aisha says she simply chooses not to deal with people like that. Furthermore, Aisha said that a young man used to come to her workplace at the same local university and told Aisha that he was

"surprised that Lebanon had a Christian population and he was also surprised I was not dark and he was talking about how Crusaders tried to free Lebanon". Aisha said that she thinks he was ignorant and so it didn't hurt her feelings.

Badria, a Christian who moved to the U.S. 33 years ago in order to be with her husband, remarked that some time ago (before 9/11) while taking classes at a local university, "a professor found out that I was from Syria and asked me questions about how women dressed and he was surprised to see a woman from Syria wearing pants and having a college degree". Hanan, a non-practicing Muslim from Syria, offers "I feel that people are cautious at the beginning of an encounter – they usually say at the end that I don't look or behave like a Middle Easterner". Houda, a Muslim from Jerusalem who wears the *hijab*, offered "cashiers stare and don't know how to act with me, they think I don't speak English". Nabiha, a Muslim from Palestine who dresses in Western styles, reports that she and a group of female friends, some in the *hijab* and some not, went to lunch at La Madeline restaurant in Cobb County. The chef became upset with the group of women over some confusion with the food and said to them in a demeaning tone "Don't you understand English?".

Respondents have experienced anti-Islamic and anti-Middle Eastern sentiments from their fellow Americans. Nabiha reports that during a staff gathering at work, a coworker who had just listened to talk radio blurted out "can you believe what 'they' ('they' being Muslims) are teaching their children?". Nabiha asked the coworker what she means by 'they' and told her not to generalize or blame the religion for any ill behavior by members of the religion. Fortunately, in this case the coworker apologized profusely and Nabiha felt that the discussion opened room for questions and a discussion about Muslims. When negative media representations of Middle Easterners and/or Muslims arouse racism in the majority population,

female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants may feel uncomfortable even in their own neighborhoods as well as public spaces which they once felt comfortable frequenting. Hanan reports that she does not feel 100% safe in her own neighborhood because "anytime there is an event that relates to terrorism caused by Arabs/Muslims outside of the U.S. the event could fire back on us with hate crimes and discrimination". Maha, a Muslim from Iraq who dresses in Western styles, said that she used to volunteer at a Christian school, but she said that "after 9/11 they began treating me unfairly". The media hype, which peaked shortly after 9/11, regarding 'Islamic terrorism' likely played a role in the way Maha was treated.

Negative sentiments set into motion by the media are also fairly common in the 'virtual' public spaces of the internet. I asked all respondents if they had ever received anti-Middle Eastern or anti-Islamic email from a coworker or fellow student. While many said that they had not, or that they had received them only from friends as a 'joke', Sameeha, a Muslim who moved to the U.S. from Egypt as a child and who wears the *hijab*, reported receiving emails with negative sentiments towards Muslims from associates on the boards she serves on. While Sameeha remarked that she has become 'numb' to situations like this, she says that, nevertheless, it makes her feel horrible. Zaynab, a Muslim from Jordan who dresses in Western styles, reported that an American coworker showed her an email about Obama being a Muslim terrorist. While Zaynab believes the coworker wasn't trying to be rude, it is upsetting to Zaynab that the words 'Muslim' and 'terrorist' frequently go hand in hand in the U.S. Regarding U.S. media, Aya, a Muslim from Pakistan, commented "I would like the media most of all to portray the majority of Muslims and not just the few doing bad stuff".

Cultural Conflict and Alienation

Respondents reported experiencing cultural conflict, which can occur when immigrants have relatively different customs than those found in the destination country, and can result in racist prejudice of a majority population towards immigrants and lead to feelings of alienation for the immigrants. Recall Marcus Eli Ravage's (1884-1965) (in Daniels, 2002) analysis of the problem of cultural conflict for European immigrants coming to the U.S. around the turn of the century, in which he stated that the European immigrants' Old World traditions came into conflict with America as soon as European immigrants set foot in the U.S. Realizing that even European immigrants, people who hold the same or very similar religious views as most Americans, experience cultural conflict, imagine the degree of cultural conflict for an immigrant whose religion is so different from that of many Americans, a religion that is seen by some misguided Americans as a religion that espouses terrorism.

Sameeha reported that, at a previous job, she would attend work related meetings and that "they used to start every meeting with a Christian prayer and they talked about being patriotic in formal speeches and how those terrorists are out to get them". Furthermore, some Americans may not be understanding or supportive of non-Christian religious requirements. While Nabiha, a Muslim who lives in Alpharetta, does not wear a headscarf, she does make it a point to dress modestly. She remarked that she joined a local pool and wanted to wear a T-shirt over her bathing suit for modesty reasons. While Nabiha was told by those working at the pool that T-shirts over swimsuits were not allowed under the pretext that the fibers would clog the drains, she said that management looked the other way if it was a 'fair' person wearing it for health reasons. Farah, a Christian from Syria who moved to the U.S. to pursue a medical

career, reported that she was at Macy's at Lenox mall in order to purchase linens. After looking at the linens for quite a while she chose some which, due to the signage, she believed to be on sale. She then attempted to find a sales clerk, but said that it took her a while to find one. After finally finding a sales clerk, the clerk scanned the linens at regular price. Farah, who has a slight accent, had a discussion with the clerk about the price being unfair. A man who was standing in line behind Farah said "You people, you foreigners don't know how to treat people". While we have probably all experienced a situation where we are standing in line at a store behind someone, accent or no accent, who seems to have an issue with the cashier and is taking a long time, the comment made to Farah was clearly a racist remark.

Cultural conflict and feelings of alienation can even occur in an immigrant's own neighborhood. Hanan lives in a neighborhood that is, according to her, 70% Jewish, and commented that her neighbors know she is Syrian. She reported that around 2003, a neighbor put up a 'nativity scene' with an American soldier and bodies of dead Arabs in a ditch at his house. Furthermore, Hanan found a plastic snake in her mailbox shortly after the war began in Iraq, she doesn't know from who or why. Hanan reported that, even before 9/11, someone put an article about the Syrian government's violations of human rights in her mailbox. All of this has led to Hanan not feeling completely comfortable even in her own upper-middle class neighborhood.

## Who 'Belongs' in the U.S.?

While none of the research participants reported any experiences of violence against themselves, some of the participants who wore the *hijab* have experienced aggression and

discrimination from other Americans who made it clear that they did not feel that the respondents belonged in the U.S. Sameeha reported that, upon entering her mosque (which had previously been vandalized as well as burglarized), people drove by in trucks with confederate flags yelling "Go home terrorist". Houda stated that, while parking her car at the strip mall where her restaurant is located in Marietta, a man whom she described as a "redneck alcoholic", got out of his car, called her the 'F' word, and then said "go back to where you came from". Likewise, Rasha, a Muslim from Pakistan who wears the *hijab*, commented that once in front of Publix, someone went by saying to her "go back to your country".

Feeling Comfortable in Public Spaces

Some respondents reported feeling uncomfortable in some public spaces. Zaynab stated that she feels uncomfortable in nightclubs, specifically naming Plaka (a Mediterranean-style restaurant/night club which a few respondents said they frequent), and other places where there is heavy drinking and misbehaving men. Aya, who wears an abaya and headscarf, stated that she does not always feel very welcome in public places. For this reason, she travels close to home (in the Alpharetta/ Roswell area) because she says she doesn't feel comfortable when she doesn't know the way and may need help.

Some respondents felt that the burden was on them to make sure other Americans were comfortable sharing public spaces with them. For example, Malika, a Muslim from Eritrea, previously wore a black abaya but now says she avoids it completely because she "felt like people were looking at her even more differently when she wore black". She now wears brighter colors and long skirts or long pants with long shirts and a brightly colored headscarf

instead of the black abaya to avoid getting as many strange looks in public places. Furthermore, Malika says she now avoids swimming pools, water parks, and co-ed fitness centers because, due to religious restrictions, she has a dress code which makes her feel very uncomfortable in these places and she feels that others are uncomfortable with her dress code as well.

## Hyper-Visibility and Scrutiny

Some respondents, reported experiencing 'hyper-visibility' and scrutiny in public spaces in the Atlanta area, especially those who wear the *hijab*, since it is a signifier of Islam. Many respondents reported that they felt scrutinized more frequently in rural and suburban areas than in urban areas, and attributed this to the fact that people in these parts of Atlanta are not as exposed to immigrants as those who live in the city. However, scrutiny of female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants, especially those who wear the *hijab*, can occur anywhere. Samia, a Muslim who wears the *hijab*, mentioned that sometimes in Northpoint, Lenox, and Perimeter Malls "people look at me funny". Rita, who volunteers at her children's elementary school in Cumming, has the opportunity to eat lunch with her children in the school cafeteria. However, Rita states that she feels uncomfortable in the lunchroom because some parents who are there look at her with unpleasant, shocked faces. Because of this, Rita, who says she used to participate at quite a few events at her children's school in Houston, Texas, does not participate in PTA at her children's current school in Cumming. Furthermore, Rita does not want to be a room mom at this school because of her dress code and the negative attention she feels she gets for it. Aya told of how at a restaurant in Hawkinsville, a customer came up to she and her husband and started asking them questions about Islam in a demeaning way. Aya says

her husband now refuses to go to Hawkinsville because the situation made them so uncomfortable. Miriam, a Muslim from Lebanon who dresses in Western styles, said she feels scrutinized at her government job in Midtown. She said she thinks twice before going to the mailroom because she is concerned that the people she works with will be suspicious of her and what she is doing there.

Zaynab, who is Muslim but wears the *hijab* only to attend mosque, was torn because she feels that she should wear the *hijab* at all times, but has some fear of it and says she "is just not ready". Recall Malika, who stated that she avoids wearing a black abaya because she perceived it to draw more negative attention to herself than the brightly colored clothing and headscarf that she now wears. According to Malika, wearing a black abaya made her more 'visible', and hence more subject to scrutiny, than brightly colored clothing.

## Violence, Discrimination, Defamation, and Intolerance

Respondents reported experiencing discrimination, defamation, and intolerance in public spaces in the Atlanta area. While no respondents reported violence against themselves, some respondents said that the mosques they regularly attend had been vandalized and/or burglarized. Other respondents have reported racist and defamatory remarks from passers-by as well as from coworkers. Sameeha reported that, upon entering her mosque one day in the Peachtree City area with other Muslims, people drove by in trucks with confederate flags yelling "Go home terrorists". Another respondent, Nadia, a Muslim from Syria, overheard an American coworker who had just adopted a Muslim boy explain to fellow coworkers that the adopted little boy was the product of incest. The coworker talked about 'honor killings' and

about how social workers took the mother away from her family because she would be killed since, in Islam, it is a shame to the family that she was raped. The coworker then said to the group "this is how Muslims are". Hearing this upset Nadia. Nadia felt the need to address the group, saying "This is not Islam, don't blame it on the religion. It is a biased opinion, and a general assumption". Samia, who used to work at a grocery store in Tucker, stated that a female customer at the cash register said to her "all Muslims are terrorists".

Sameeha attempted to put several advertisements in a local newspaper in order to invite people to services held by an Islamic organization as well as her mosque. Upon notifying the newspaper of her intentions of submitting the advertisements, Sameeha received a letter from the sales manager stating that they could not run the advertisements because, as the sales manager said, they are a Christian newspaper and it would be like "putting an ad for Pepsi Cola in a Coca Cola advertisement". Zaynab reported that a Christian woman whom she works with was talking to her about religion and kept badgering her about how Christianity is superior to Islam and that Zaynab "needs to reevaluate her religion of Islam". Aya, who wears the *hijab*, commented that upon attempting to apply for a job in-person "the secretary did not want to give me the application form". Zahra, a non-practicing Christian from Iran who worked at a pharmacy in Marietta, offered "a male white American customer told me he didn't want me to fill his prescription because 'you are a Muslim and a fucking foreigner'".

For several of the respondents, just as disturbing as the discrimination they encountered themselves in public spaces was the discrimination their children had encountered. Nabiha, a Palestinian Muslim, reported that, at her son's school they held an 'International Night' event where families were to bring a native dish to share and the children were to walk in a parade holding a flag to represent their country of origin. When, during rehearsals, her son said that he

would be representing Palestine, he was told by someone who worked at the school that he is not from Palestine, but from Jordan. Upon hearing about this from her son, Nabiha talked to the school principal, who in turn talked with the Fulton Board of Education about the situation. Their compromise was to have Nabiha's son represent the 'Palestinian People' and not Palestine. Rita commented that some of her neighbors "do not let their daughters come across my front yard and do not let their daughters play with my daughters". Undoubtedly, the intolerance and discrimination experienced by their children adds stress to the daily lives of the respondents.

## Fear and Insecurity in Public Spaces

Several respondents experienced fear and insecurity in public spaces. Miriam said that when she is in large groups of people where some of the women are wearing the *hijab*, she is "afraid that a crazy person will do something to the women in *hijab*". Recall Aya who remarked that she feels that she is not always very welcome at places and therefore only travels close to home because she doesn't feel comfortable when she doesn't know the way and may need help. Nabiha reports that she feels concerned for her children's safety. She reports "I have three teenage boys and one nine year old daughter. Two neighbors have made it very clear that they do not like us there. They have even taken pictures of my children playing in the cul-de-sac".

Effects of Class and Religiosity on Patterns of Association in the Host Society

All research participants considered themselves to be middle to upper-middle class and all patronize public spaces which are frequented by other middle-class Americans. Furthermore, most participants who had jobs outside of the home worked with middle-class Americans. 'Favorite places' listed by respondents were those frequented by the average American. It seems that, just like many Americans, research participants' favorite public spaces are those which are natural and peaceful, have good shopping, or have good food. Houda says her favorite local places are the beach at Lake Allatoona and the beach in Acworth because "they are serene and there is a peaceful feeling and nature". Malika says her favorite place is Target because of the "great service!". Rita says her favorite place is Jason's Deli in Alpharetta because they are friendly (first experience was bad, but manager apologized regarding an employee who was rude to them) and she and her family like the food there. Other popular 'favorite places' given by participants were exercise-related spaces such as athletic clubs and tennis courts, Stone Mountain Park and other local parks, Buckhead, the Fox Theater, bookstores such as Border's and Barnes and Noble, malls, and yes, Middle Eastern-owned restaurants such as Persepolis and Amore.

While those respondents who are Muslim and wear the *hijab* encountered more negative remarks explicitly directed at them, Christian as well as non-practicing research participants also had negative experiences in public spaces. Recall Zahra, a non-practicing Christian from Iran, who worked at a pharmacy in Marietta and was told by a male American customer that he did not want her to fill his prescription because she is a Muslim and a foreigner.

Ethnic-Owned Businesses and Mosques as Social Gathering Places for Immigrants

There are Middle Eastern and/or Muslim owned businesses interspersed throughout the Atlanta area, and these businesses are visited by many of the respondents. Some favorite businesses given by respondents included, in Atlanta, Amore (Italian name, Mediterranean food and Middle Eastern owner), Plaka (Greek theme, Mediterranean food and Middle Eastern owner), Ibiza Restaurant and Lounge, Divan Restaurant, Al-Madina Market, Leon International Bakery, and the Mediterranean Bakery. In Roswell, respondents mentioned Aladdin's Grill & Deli, Sahara Mediterranean Grill, Darvish Persian Tea House, and Nour International Market. In Sandy Springs there is Persepolis Restaurant, Sultan's Lebanese Restaurant, Fanoos Persian Cuisine & Club, and Rumi's Kitchen. In Norcross, respondents like The Mughals Restaurant and Sabri Kabab House. In Marietta there is the Jerusalem Bakery, in Alpharetta there is the Global Market, and in Decatur there is Café Istanbul and the Dekalb Farmer's Market (while it is not Middle Eastern/Muslim owned, it is very popular with research participants). There are many more Middle Eastern and/or Muslim owned restaurants, groceries, and bakeries in the Atlanta area that research participants listed as visiting, however, these were the most frequently mentioned.

I was able to witness the social aspect of mosque membership when I visited an Islamic center in Alpharetta during Ramadan. In addition to worship services, this Islamic center provides Islamic school for children, resume writing classes, and computer classes. Rita, an immigrant from Taiwan who converted to Islam, mentioned this particular Islamic center as the place where she feels most comfortable in the Atlanta area.

## Public Space and 'The Community'

Several respondents felt pressure to comply with the norms of the Muslim community. Hassiba, a recently married Muslim from Pakistan in her early 20's, reported that before she was married her parents wouldn't let her go to a club. But now she says she can go anywhere, even without her husband. Hassiba, who typically dresses in Western styles, says she makes sure that she is dressed modestly when she knows that she will see her parents and the families of some of her more conservative friends, so as to be respectful. She reports that she feels most uncomfortable in "…places where there are many men and women from the community judging me and maybe gossiping about me. People in the community judge a lot by the way people are dressed, for example whether or not your hair is covered". Hassiba went on to say that, recently, upon seeing an acquaintance from the community in the library at a local university, the acquaintance rudely questioned Hassiba about why she wasn't wearing her wedding ring. Fatima, a non-practicing Muslim from Iran who likes to go to 'American' bars, says that she typically wears "short skirts when I go to parties", further stating "If I go to an American party, I don't care about the way I dress". However, she says she dresses more conservatively when she goes to Iranian parties.

## Work Spaces

One respondent reported that obtaining employment was problematic. Aya, who has a master's degree and wears the *hijab* reported "…once at a (sewing) store the manager said that they were not hiring for the times that I was looking for, but they had a sign up for hiring till

another few weeks". However, Aya left the shop with the impression that the manager did not want to hire her because she was Muslim. Even with a master's degree, Aya could not obtain work at a sewing shop. Furthermore, she attempted to apply for an office job, but said that the secretary did not want to give her the application form. She eventually decided to run a daycare business out of her home.

Several respondents reported that, at times, work spaces and work-related functions had been problematic for them. Recall Aisha, a non-practicing Muslim from Lebanon who works at a local university, who had to endure a young man who came to her workplace and told her that he was surprised that Aisha was not dark, as well as telling Aisha about how Crusaders tried to free Lebanon. Sameeha, a Muslim from Egypt, used to be a realtor but is now a consultant and a member of a local Islamic organization. She felt that she was treated differently at work due to her Middle Eastern and Muslim background. She does not feel that this treatment is obvious to an outsider, and used the term 'micro inequalities' to describe her treatment. Sameeha remarked that she had noticed subtle behaviors in coworkers, behaviors that she felt the coworkers didn't even realize they were displaying, but that Sameeha could blatantly feel. She stated that these micro inequalities "make me feel not good, not part of the crowd, singled out". Sameeha also says that she has felt uncomfortable at work parties "because of drinking, I feel like I don't belong". Recall Zaynab, who reported that a Christian woman whom she works with kept badgering her about how Christianity is superior to Islam, even telling her that she should reevaluate her religion. Jehan, a Christian from Palestine who works for Scientific Atlanta in Lawrenceville, recalled that she received an anti-Palestinian email from a coworker. Jehan said the email made her feel uncomfortable, and so she confronted the man. Jehan said that upon confrontation the man blushed but Jehan felt that he didn't change his point of view,

that he had already made his mind up about Palestinians. Jehan also remarked that she feels she is treated differently at work because of her accent. She feels that when it is time for promotions, she is sometimes passed over because of her accent and background. Recall Miriam, who reported that she feels scrutinized at her government job in Midtown Atlanta, thinking twice before going to the mailroom because she wonders what the people she works with will think of her, if they will wonder what she is doing there. Miriam also feels that most teams for work projects are formed during happy hour and so she feels that she is at a disadvantage because she doesn't drink alcohol and so doesn't attend these functions. Recall Nadia, who works at the pharmacy at Emory University Hospital and had overheard an American coworker who had just adopted a Muslim boy explain to fellow coworkers that the adopted little boy was the product of incest, and that "this is how Muslims are". Nadia felt the need to take the time to explain to her coworkers that this is not a true statement about her religion. Raja, a Muslim from Pakistan, who works at Emory University School of Medicine, stated that she feels uncomfortable at work related parties during meal time because of alcoholic beverages and non-halal food being served. Rasha, who works for a local telecommunications company, commented that she doesn't go to after work activities because she has felt uncomfortable in the past when alcohol was served at them.

## Experiences in Urban, Suburban, and Rural Areas

While none of the participants live in rural areas outside of Atlanta, most participants have visited rural areas, even if just driving through. Some participants mentioned that they had friendly experiences in public spaces in rural areas outside of Atlanta, just as they do within

the city and surrounding suburban areas. However, many respondents perceived differences between their experiences in rural public spaces, suburban public spaces and urban public spaces. One participant stated that the lack of diversity in rural areas led her to not want to be in these areas. Several respondents reported that inhabitants of rural areas and even some suburban areas were more likely to stare at them than inhabitants of urban areas, because in urban areas, people are exposed to more diversity. As Nabiha put it, “We slip by in the city”.

Special Caring and Concern for Middle Easterners and Muslims

Not all of the respondents’ experiences in public spaces in the Atlanta area have been negative. Even in the midst of negative experiences, there have been Americans who have stood up for and shown kindness towards respondents. Recall Samia, who moved to the U.S. from Northern Iraq for political asylum. Samia reported that when she worked as a cashier at Ingles in Tucker, a female customer at the cash register said “all Muslims are terrorists”. However, another customer in line behind the woman who made the remark defended Samia, telling the woman who made the comment that it was just a stereotype. Also recall Houda, who discussed an act of racism by a fellow American in a parking lot who “called her the ‘F’ word and yelled at her to ‘go back where you came from’”. Houda ended up calling the police and said that the police officer who responded to the call was very upset with the man and asked Houda if she wanted to press charges.

Some respondents have reported that Americans have shown respect for their customs and beliefs, and concern for their well-being. Hassiba, who did an internship at a local hospital, reported that her coworkers frequently had conversations about sex, however they

acknowledged that Hassiba had certain limitations about discussing this topic, and so they were respectful of these limitations when Hassiba was present. Malika stated that some of her coworkers, who played music at work which contained profanity, turned off their music while Malika was around. Nabiha reported that her coworkers have been very caring during Ramadan. Nadia, who said that she is good friends with several of her neighbors, reported that after 9/11 she received phone calls from her neighbors asking if she and her family were okay and making sure that people were not bothering them.

Opportunities for Female Middle Eastern and Muslim Immigrants in the U.S.

In spite of the negative experiences some research participants have faced in public spaces, many participants believe that their lives have improved since moving to the U.S. Many participants said that they moved to the U.S. hoping to obtain a good education and a good job, and they were not let down. A number of participants also stated that they want good schools and good lives for their children, and believe that living in the U.S. can provide this. Other participants said that 'freedom' particularly 'freedom of speech' came to mind when they considered moving to the U.S. Badria, who moved to the U.S. to be with her husband, and attended college in the U.S., commented "Here you don't have to dream about becoming someone. You just have to work for it. Your dream can come true". Hanan, who received her PhD from a local university, said about moving to the U.S., "I wanted the best education, and got it. I wanted personal freedom and free speech, and got it". Houda, who moved to the U.S. to be with her husband, stated "People in the Middle East think America is the biggest goal you

can reach". Nadia, who moved to the U.S. because she married a U.S. resident, offered "Anything you dream of you can do in this country."

## Other Concerns

In the wake of 9/11, antiterrorism legislation enacted by Congress such as the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 - which expands the government's power to conduct electronic surveillance and detain foreigners without charges - has had an effect on the psyche of immigrants. Malika remarked that, while negative experiences in public spaces which she perceived as occurring due to her race and religiosity made her feel uncomfortable, this uncomfortable feeling was trumped by her concern that she and her family, as well as others in the community, were being surveilled by the U.S. government, including tapped phones and visits from the FBI, and the fear of incarceration of family, friends, and acquaintances. Several respondents stated that they were sure their phone lines were tapped and several respondents reported that they had been paid a visit or two by the FBI.

# CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

## Patterns of Association and Participation in the Host Society

There is not a monolithic female Middle Eastern/Muslim immigrant experience in public spaces in the U.S., instead there is much variety. In fact, Middle Eastern and/or Muslim women have a rich diversity of experiences. Many things such as religiosity, class, and nationality play a role in the immigration experience. Scholars are increasingly recognizing cultural and class diversity within ethnic groups, with recent immigrants coming to the U.S. appearing to have either a high level of education or a low level. Boyle et al. (1998) argue that non-mosqued immigrants and those with higher educational levels and professional skills are mainly in the middle class, are dispersed throughout the U.S., and interact significantly with mainstream America. These groups have been able to move through society relatively untouched by the effects of discrimination (Jamal, 2005). Most of the respondents in this study have college degrees (including several with advanced degrees), were in the process of obtaining college degrees, or were married to men with college degrees, and almost all of them have experienced discrimination or harassment in one form or another in the Atlanta area. However, reports of extreme forms of discrimination and harassment, which are more likely to be experienced by the lower classes, were rare in this study.

In this study, several gatekeepers were initially contacted for interviews and from there, the snowball method was used. Since snowball sampling identifies cases of interest from people who know other people with relevant cases, it is probable that the initial respondents refer the researcher to friends, family, or others whom the respondent is very familiar with. It is likely that

those referred by the respondent will be of similar class, and live in the same area, as the respondent. Therefore, if the initial respondent lives in a middle to upper middle class suburb north of Atlanta, then it is unlikely that the respondent will know of and therefore refer the researcher to a newly arrived refugee who lives in a lower middle class suburb east of Atlanta. While care was taken in using multiple initial contact points so as not to recruit all research participants from a narrow circle of like-minded people, access to the lower classes remained elusive. Chapter two goes into further detail about the attempts to recruit respondents from the lower classes and the refugee populations for this study. No respondents in this study described their standard of living as below middle class. This is a limitation of the study since, as Gimenez (1988) argues, nationality and/or race are not as important in determining patterns of association and participation in the host society as social class, with middle and upper middle class immigrants being more likely to share the values of the dominant classes. Therefore, it is not expected that female immigrants of middle to upper middle classes will experience the more extreme forms of discrimination that would be expected from those of the lower classes. Since the middle to upper middle class women reside mainly in suburbs north of Atlanta, parts of the metropolitan area have been left unexplored in this study, including Clarkston, where many of the immigrant refugee populations reside.

Many of the respondents are not newcomers to the Atlanta area, with an average length of residence of 14 years. This has an effect on responses given in that someone who has lived in the Atlanta area for 14 years will most likely have a sense of familiarity with the area, as well as with American culture in general, which may lead to more feelings of ease in public spaces. According to Read (2004), assimilation theory proposes that acculturation is a linear process that increases with duration of U.S. residence. Thus we might expect newer arrivals to feel less

comfortable with American customs and culture and therefore have a more difficult time interacting with other Americans in public spaces than those immigrants who have had greater exposure to U.S. norms and values (Read, 2004). Therefore, a recently arrived refugee may have very different experiences from the respondents in this study.

While Boyle et al. (1998) argue that non-mosqued immigrants are mainly positioned in the middle class and interact significantly with mainstream America, this study suggests that religiosity does not prohibit a middle-class Muslim immigrant from participation in the host society. Out of the 17 women who considered themselves to be practicing Muslims (of which seven wear the *hijab*), most of them have jobs in which they work with middle-class Americans, all of them patronize public spaces which are frequented by other Americans such as discount retailers, local malls, bookstores, movie theaters, coffee shops and American style restaurants. Furthermore, all respondents mentioned places which happen to be frequented by other Americans as their favorite local public places to visit. Similar to many Americans, research participants' favorite public spaces are those which have natural beauty and are peaceful, have good shopping, or have good food. While this study has found, with a few exceptions, that those participants who wear the *hijab* have had more negative experiences in public spaces than those who do not wear it, for the most part female immigrants who wear the *hijab* were not discouraged from participating in the host society.

## Cultural Conflict

Cultural conflict can occur when immigrants have relatively different customs and beliefs than those found in the destination country, resulting in racist prejudice and alienation,

even subconsciously, of a majority population towards immigrants. Cultural conflict exists because some Americans still hold on to the notion of 'America as melting pot', a holdover from the turn of the century. This assimilation model was based on white Europeans, with similar religions and customs to existing Americans, who were able to come to the U.S. and assimilate very easily, a model that is not practical in this age of globalization.

Respondents experienced varying degrees of cultural conflict in public, employment, educational, and organizational spaces. In these spaces in the U.S., it is sometimes assumed that all those present have similar beliefs, including religious beliefs. Therefore, those present who do not share the beliefs of the majority population may experience disaffection. Recall Sameeha, who reported that, at a previous job, she would attend work related meetings and that "they used to start every meeting with a Christian prayer and they talked about being patriotic in formal speeches and how those terrorists are out to get them". Other respondents have reported experiencing cultural conflict due to the lack of understanding and respect by their fellow Americans of non-Christian religious requirements. However, on the bright side, some respondents have reported that Americans have shown respect for their customs and beliefs, as well as concern for their well-being.

## The *Hijab* and Discrimination

Because the *hijab* is a signifier of Islam, women who wear it are singled out for discrimination, harassment, and even hate crimes in the U.S. This produces a conflict of interests because, as Dwyer (1999) points out, for the more orthodox, the meaning of Muslimness has been linked to the adoption of a more explicitly Islamic dress in the form of the *hijab*. Therefore

veiling, while meant to draw attention away from the woman's body, actually dramatically increases the visibility of women who wear it in the U.S. (Haddad and Smith, 2002; Kayyali 2006). The *hijab* has become a recognizable marker of difference in the U.S.

According to Nagel (2002), for other Middle Eastern and Muslim women, despite a deep sense of pride and cultural difference, there is a strong desire to fit in and be viewed as 'the same' within Western society. These women will not usually dress in Muslim attire, but wear typical Western fashions. Furthermore, some women who typically wear the *hijab* will forego it if they travel outside of their Muslim communities. Therefore, these women are not as likely to face the more extreme forms of discrimination in public spaces as the more orthodox women.

In general, Muslim respondents who did not wear the *hijab* reported fewer direct negative experiences, such as people shouting at them to " go back to where you came from", than Muslim respondents who wore the *hijab*. Respondents who dressed in Western styles did report negative experiences in various spaces, however, these experiences were typically indirect, such as overhearing someone speak negatively about Middle Easterners and Muslims at work. Most of the respondents were Muslims who wore Western style attire. I believe that there would have been more reports of extreme negative experiences if there were more respondents who wore the *hijab*. However, because many Americans buy into strong stereotypes of Middle Eastern and Muslim women, when a woman does not fit the stereotype, her fellow Americans may become confused as to what nationality she is. This may spare a Middle Eastern or Muslim woman from harassment because the potential harasser may mistake the woman for a Latina, for example (Erakat, 2005). So which qualities of an immigrant may lead a misguided American to take out his or her anger on that immigrant? According to Kayyali (2006), it is possible that religious

affiliation in combination with foreign accent, behavior, or dress may set off these acts of discrimination and hate crimes.

## The Effects of Class and Religiosity on Freedom, Safety, and Mobility

Freeman (2005) asserts that class and religiosity play a significant role in differences between female immigrants' experiences of freedom, safety, and mobility in the U.S. Furthermore, for some female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants in the U.S., mobility may be more limited and/or difficult to negotiate in the U.S. than in their country of origin (Freeman, 2005). Issues with mobility can occur if a female immigrant feels that she needs another community member to accompany her on public outings, if she wears the *hijab*, or if she does not speak English. While mobility tends to be more problematic for lower class immigrants, those in the middle class who wear the *hijab* may experience mobility issues as well. One respondent who wears the *hijab* said that she does not feel comfortable traveling on her own around the Atlanta metropolitan area and instead stays close to home, commenting "I don't feel comfortable when I don't know the way and may need help". Furthermore, several respondents who wear the *hijab* have reported that, while walking through parking lots, their fellow Americans have yelled at them to "go back to where you came from". Such occurrences change the experience of public space for those immigrants living in the U.S. Having such a thing happen can suddenly change what feels like a safe public space into a threatening open space. The idea that freedom is available to all U.S. citizens becomes problematic when a female immigrant cannot wear what she wishes and go where she pleases without being harassed or worse. While the same argument may be made for women in general, the amount

and intensity of harassment faced by an immigrant wearing the *hijab* is greater. Several respondents who either wear the *hijab* or are considering wearing the *hijab* have toiled with this issue.

Responses given by participants to the question "Why did you move to the U.S.?" support Cainkar's (1994) statement that most female immigrants, no matter where they are from, emigrate to the U.S. as the wives, daughters, or sisters of men. Cainkar (1994) goes on to say that, because of this reality, women have a different kind of immigration experience than men in that self determination may not be an option for women regarding how they will interact with their new host society. Likewise, Freeman (2005) comments that recent contributions from feminist migration scholars question the assumption of individual freedom, especially focusing on patriarchy which may serve to constrain mobility of women. However, class plays a role in female immigrants' self determination. Respondents of this study are all middle to upper middle class, most of them share workspaces with other Americans, and all do not currently have restrictions placed on them by family members as to where they may visit or travel.

## Negative Effects of the Media

The media creates expectations in mainstream America of 'what a Muslim is' as well as 'what the Middle East is like', leading to the attachment of negative meanings to images of Muslims and Middle Easterners. Falah (2005) argues that newspaper editors seem to be aware, given the actual content of newspaper reports, that the U.S. public has little interest in learning about the lives of 'ordinary' Muslim women, but that they do have an insatiable desire to be

reminded of the great social and cultural gulf that exists between themselves and the Muslim world. Jehan's experience with the coworker who blushed yet didn't yet didn't seem interested in hearing about a different point of view when Jehan confronted him about the anti-Palestinian email he sent around the workplace, underscores Falah's argument. Furthermore, anti-Middle Eastern and anti-Muslim sentiments, reported in and reproduced by the media, have aroused more open racism in America. Shaheen (1984) argues that Middle Easterners and Muslims are the only groups for whom it is socially acceptable to negatively stereotype on television and in the movies. Respondents' experiences underscore Shaheen's theory and take it one step further, in that socially acceptable negative stereotypes in the media become socially acceptable negative stereotypes in mainstream American society - including in public, semi-public, work and educational spaces.

Two common misconceptions about female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants, reproduced by the media, are that of women controlled by Middle Eastern men, and women who do not speak English, especially those who wear the *hijab*. In this study, only respondents who wear the *hijab*, or respondents who were in a group with others wearing the *hijab*, reported comments made by other Americans implying that they did not know how to speak English. Participants who dressed in Western styles did not report these types of comments.

Regarding U.S. media, Aya, a Muslim from Pakistan, commented "I would like the media most of all to portray the majority of Muslims and not just the few doing bad stuff". This respondent's wish brings up a very important point. One of the reasons why negative stereotypes of Middle Eastern and Muslim woman are so prominent in American society, having an enormous influence on immigrants' experiences in public spaces in the U.S., is because Middle Eastern and Muslim women are rarely portrayed in U.S. media as having 'normal' lives by U.S.

standards – that is, going to work or to school, or having fun with family and friends. Western media seldom portrays Muslim women as doing anything other than crying passively as they are victimized, denying Muslim women as a group any kind of normal existence (Falah, 2005). Falah (2005) goes on to say that images of Muslim women are used almost exclusively to show the abnormality of life in Muslim societies - with violence, religious fanaticism, and political turmoil being seen as common occurances. Interestingly, incorrect stereotypical media representations do not flow in one direction only. For example, a number of American movies and television shows seen throughout the world portray American women as sexually loose 'party girls'. Rita, a recently arrived Muslim from Taiwan, remarked that, prior to moving to the U.S., all of her understanding about Americans was from Hollywood movies, and stated "I thought there is going to have party every night".

## Negative Effects of Stereotypes

Stereotypical constructions of identity serve to exclude a group from the landscapes of national identity, and therefore from the nation itself (Pollard, in Mitchell, 2000; Kinsman, in Mitchell, 2000). An example of stereotypical constructions of identity at work on Middle Eastern and Muslim women is the fact that Hollywood and U.S. media associates them with the desert and the harem; as the submissive wives of terrorists or even terrorists in their own right, bombs strapped to their bodies beneath long black robes. Negative stereotypes perpetuated by the media give life to 'imaginative geographies'; constructions which equate distance with difference, in which 'they' lack the positive attributes that 'we' possess (Said, 1978), further justifying the discrimination and harassment of Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants.

While those respondents who wear the *hijab* have reported more negative comments directed at them in public spaces than those who do not wear the *hijab*, one Christian research participant had an anti-Islamic comment directed towards her in the semi-public space where she worked, supporting Abdelrazek's (2005:140) argument that "American society tends to lump all women from Muslim countries into the category of 'Arab', and to view all 'Arabs' as 'Muslims', and all Muslims as practicing a particular rigid kind of Islam". Furthermore, a few of the respondents' coworkers verbalized anti-Middle Eastern and anti-Islamic sentiments at work and were surprised to find themselves confronted by the respondents who do not look like the stereotypical 'Middle Eastern or Muslim woman'. As stated previously, because many Americans buy into such strong stereotypes of Middle Eastern and Muslim women, when a woman does not fit the stereotype, her fellow Americans may be confused as to what nationality she is. Therefore, misguided Americans may find themselves in an embarrassing situation if they choose to express anti-Middle Eastern or anti-Islamic sentiments in her presence.

## Fear and Insecurity in Public Spaces

While in theory anyone has the right to be in public spaces, not everyone feels comfortable in public spaces. Women and minorities in particular may feel especially uncomfortable in public spaces (Mitchell, 2000). So what of a minority woman, especially one who wears attire which marks her as 'other'? According to Mitchell (2000), there is the assumption that everyone 'has their place' in the world. So who belongs in the U.S.? Mitchell (2000) goes on to say that people often hunt down those they believe to be a threat to the authenticity of the nation. Therefore, public spaces can produce fear and insecurity in Middle

Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants who may be perceived by their fellow Americans as 'enemies of the U.S.'. While no research participants reported more extreme forms of violence against themselves, some of the participants, particularly those who wear the *hijab*, have experienced aggression and discrimination from other Americans who made it clear that they did not feel that the respondents belonged in the U.S.

Often, Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants feel that the burden is on them to make sure Americans are comfortable sharing public spaces with them, in effect lessening the immigrants' own fear and insecurity in these same public spaces (Marvasti and McKinney, 2004). One respondent avoided fitness-related spaces, where she had the distinct feeling that others were uncomfortable with her Islamic dress code. This same respondent changed her day to day style and color of clothing because she felt that she received too many 'strange' looks when she wore a black abaya.

Scrutiny of Female Immigrants

Female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants may experience 'hyper-visibility' and scrutiny in public spaces in the U.S., especially those who wear the *hijab*, since it is a signifier of Islam. Many respondents perceived more scrutiny in rural and suburban areas than in urban areas, and attributed this to the fact that people in these areas have not had as much exposure to immigrants as those who live in the city. However, scrutiny of female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants, especially those who wear the *hijab*, can occur anywhere. Due to the scrutiny she received from her fellow Americans in the Atlanta area, one respondent

who wears the *hijab* felt the need to change the color and style of her attire, from a black abaya and black headscarf to brightly colored, loose fitting clothing and headscarf.

Muslim women are not only concerned about scrutiny from 'white Americans'. According to Nagel (2005), more than ever, Muslim women living in Western societies are subjected to constant scrutiny by their 'community'. As the community sees it, certain public spaces are dangerous for women to occupy, danger that can be minimized in many instances through community norms of appropriate female dress. The community sees spaces as either transparent or opaque– the former referring to public spaces within which community members can monitor women's behavior and the later referring to public space that makes monitoring more difficult (Dwyer 1999; Mohammad 2005). While none of the respondents reported monitoring by community members to the extent that they could not take certain jobs or even attend college, one Muslim respondent was not allowed by her parents, even in her early 20s, to go to a nightclub until she married. Once the respondent was married, she said that she was able to go wherever she wanted, even without her husband. The parents' concern with their daughter not going to a nightclub until she married underscores Freeman's (2005) argument that being seen in a place considered morally inappropriate for women jeopardizes a woman's reputation, affecting both her prospects for marriage and the honor of her family.

Ironically, Muslim women, especially young Muslim women who simply wish to 'fit in' with American society, can feel more uncomfortable in spaces where there are other members of the community than they do in typical 'American' spaces. Two of the younger respondents, one a practicing Muslim and the other a non-practicing Muslim, stated that they feel the need to dress more conservatively than they typically do when they know they will see members of the community. One of these respondents reported that she feels most uncomfortable in places

where there are community members judging her and possibly gossiping about her, usually related to attire.

## Discrimination and Racism in Work and Educational Spaces

As respondents' narratives have shown, work and educational spaces can be sources of racism and emotional discomfort. These spaces can be especially problematic for Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants who are discriminated against since they are not places where one can simply get up and leave. Immigrants with different beliefs and customs than those of the majority population can find themselves in uncomfortable situations at the workplace, or even as victims of discrimination. Recall Marvasti and McKinney's (2004) observation that answering for one's ethnic background and religion can become a considerable chore in the workplace. Even when respondents were not asked to account for themselves directly, some felt the need to stand up for their religion, culture or ethnic background when overhearing negative stereotypes about Middle Easterners and Muslims propagated by coworkers. Respondents have been put in the position of either remaining silent while others make slanderous remarks about their religion, culture, or ethnic background, or of possibly 'starting trouble' by standing up for themselves, perhaps even alienating themselves from their coworkers. Respondents have had to make these difficult decisions, when it is not appropriate for them to be put in this position in the first place, especially in the workplace. While several respondents have claimed to 'blow off' coworkers' or colleagues' anti-Middle Eastern or anti-Muslim comments, they most likely have an adverse effect on the morale and productivity of the immigrants who encounter them.

Contemporary work spaces consist of more than just the cubicle or the break room. Zukin (1995) argues that there are new public spaces formed by the 'transactional space' of computer technology, with negative sentiments set into motion by the media being fairly common in the 'virtual' public spaces of the internet. Several respondents have stated that the internet was used by colleagues and coworkers to proliferate anti-Middle Eastern and anti-Islamic sentiments via emails sent to groups of people, some of whom happened to be the respondents. One respondent reported receiving anti-Islamic emails from associates on boards that she serves on. In one breath she said that she did not feel much because she had become numb, but then she said that the emails made her feel horrible and that she disassociated herself from them. Anti-Muslim and anti-Middle Eastern emails being sent around freely, especially to unsuspecting Middle Eastern and Muslim coworkers, underscores the argument that migration can be associated with a degree of alienation for the immigrant. Alienation can occur when the majority population accepts, because popular media puts forth anti-Middle Eastern and anti-Islamic sentiments, that this is an appropriate topic for mainstream society, including work internet spaces where an immigrant may unwittingly receive such an email.

Relationships with fellow employees do not blossom only in the workplace. Work related functions and after work get-togethers can be a way for coworkers to strengthen relationships and even form work groups. However, Muslim workers can find themselves feeling alienated in these situations. Jamal (2005) points out that observing Islamic guidelines – such as not drinking alcohol – may impact work related functions. Muslims who do not attend work-related functions due to religious restrictions, or do attend but refuse to drink alcohol or eat non-halal meat, may be seen by coworkers as 'overly religious' and 'difficult to get along with', potentially straining relations. Several respondents mentioned that they did not attend after work

functions where alcohol was served because this made them feel uncomfortable. One respondent felt sure that most teams for work projects were formed during happy hour and so she felt that she was at a disadvantage because she doesn't drink alcohol and so doesn't attend these functions. Therefore, the act of not attending work related get-togethers and functions due to religious restrictions can negatively effect on the careers of Middle Eastern and/or Muslim women.

## Ethnic and Religious Spaces

Cattell et al. (2008) argue that while certain public spaces may be appreciated at face value, other spaces, such as ethnic owned businesses, may be important to immigrants in particular for the way they conjure up other, more distant places, such as an immigrant's country of origin. Cattell et al. (2008) go on to say that it is through these 'comfort zones' that some immigrants are able to negotiate and make sense of the meaning of 'home', which may now be in the U.S. but is also linked to the immigrant's country of origin. While as of yet, Atlanta has no established Middle Eastern community such as the Asian and Latin American communities on Buford Highway, there are Middle Eastern and/or Muslim owned businesses interspersed throughout Atlanta, of which all respondents mentioned visiting at least a few. In addition to practical concerns for some immigrants, such as eating at restaurants that serve halal meats, Middle Eastern and/or Muslim owned restaurants, bakeries, groceries, and other businesses in the Atlanta area serve as social gathering places since there are others there whom immigrants can identify with, few language barriers and a reminder of home.

In addition to Middle Eastern and Muslim owned businesses, the mosque and its religious community plays a role in establishing a sense of home and well-being for some Muslim immigrants in the U.S. (Ehrkamp, 2007), and contrary to popular belief, many U.S. Muslim communities allow females to attend mosques (Read, 2004). In addition to worship services, many mosques provide services such as Islamic school, homework tutoring, and after-school programs for children, job training and employment services, as well as a place to socialize. I was able to witness the social aspect of mosque membership upon visiting a local Islamic center in Alpharetta several times during Ramadan in order to conduct interviews. Participants were interviewed at the mosque in several small groups, the camaraderie between the women being apparent. Most of the women had their young children with them, the children playing in organized groups in the hallways, yet free to move in and out of the classroom where we interviewed in order to visit with their mothers. I observed at the mosque a sense of community, not with strict rules but respect and warmth. Rita, an immigrant from Taiwan who converted to Islam, mentioned this particular Islamic center as the place where she feels most comfortable in the Atlanta area.

## Positive Experiences

In 2002 reports, Muslim American organizations stated that the vast majority of Middle Easterners and Muslims experienced special caring, kindness and protection from persons outside their communities in the past year (Cainkar, 2002). This study supports this finding in that respondents have commented that some Americans have shown respect for their customs and beliefs, as well as concern for their well-being.

In spite of the negative experiences some research participants have faced in public spaces, many participants believe that their lives have improved since moving to the U.S. Many respondents reported having more opportunities in the U.S. than they did in their countries of origin. Opportunities reported by respondents were not just opportunities for a good education and a good job, but also opportunities for freedom, including freedom of speech.

## Opportunities for Female Immigrants

Boyle et al. (1998) argue that, as new global economic relations offer greater employment opportunities to women, so migration is becoming feminized. According to Boyle et al. (1998) the polarization of the labor market in global cities within the advanced industrialized countries has created employment niches for immigrant women to either service higher income groups or take degraded manufacturing work. However, class plays a major role in Boyle et al.'s theory. The respondents in this study were middle to upper-middle class and did not service higher income groups nor engage in manufacturing work. As previously mentioned, most of these women have degrees, some with advanced degrees and most of them have highly skilled, good paying jobs. The respondents have greater opportunities to put their specialized skills to work in the U.S. than they do in their countries of origin. As Freeman (2005) argues, there are complex social and economic factors that enter into migration experiences.

The optimistic attitude that many of the respondents had about the great opportunities awaiting them in the U.S. is most likely not felt to the same extent by lower class immigrants. As previously mentioned, a limitation of this study is the fact that none of the respondents were of the lower classes, namely refugees. Work opportunities in the U.S. may be scarce for

refugees, who are often unprepared, and potentially less well-suited, for migration than are economic migrants. Empirical research on refugee populations has generally shown a high degree of initial downward mobility and lower employment rates (Boyle et al., 1998). Refugees who enter the U.S. have a number of internal issues they toil with in addition to their encounters with nationals. Boyle et al. (1998) argue that refugees who enter the U.S. may have had to have made the very difficult decision of leaving part of their family behind as well as potentially having their families permanently divided between countries or even continents. Upon arrival in their new country, refugees typically deal with feelings of disorientation and a sense of loss; the loss of place attachments, considerable financial loss, a sense of lost status in the community, lost culture, lost identity, isolation, as well as the fear of what a new life in a new country will be like (Boyle et al., 1998). Refugees must learn to deal with new customs, a new language, and even new administrative procedures (Boyle et al., 1998). Nadia, who works in the pharmacy of a local hospital and considers herself to be somewhat above middle class, offered "Anything you dream of you can do in this country." This statement is not necessarily true for lower class refugees who are poorly educated and do not speak English.

According to Boyle et al. (1998), there is strong evidence that ethnic groups often experience poor work opportunities, likely involving issues of racism and discrimination, with female ethnic minorities often experiencing the most severe discrimination. Furthermore, many immigrants have qualifications and experience that suit them for higher-skilled jobs than what they end up doing once they arrive. However, there is also previous literature which states that the educational level of an immigrant is directly related to employability, which plays a major role in immigrants' ability to assimilate. Most of the respondents in this study have a high level of education and highly skilled, good paying jobs. However, several of the respondents with

good jobs believed that they were passed over to work on projects and for job promotions for reasons either directly or indirectly related to their ethnicity or religious beliefs.

Obtaining employment may be problematic for female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants who wear the *hijab*. Due to racism and discrimination by some employers in the U.S., the *hijab* can serve as a barrier between the woman wearing it and employment. One respondent, who has a master's degree, reported difficulties obtaining even unskilled work. Interestingly, she was the only respondent who wore a black abaya and headscarf. It is possible that Americans are more likely to discriminate against a Muslim woman who wears an abaya and headscarf than a Muslim woman who wears modest, loose fitting Western style clothing and a headscarf.

## Other Concerns

For at least several of the respondents with children, just as disturbing to them as the discrimination they had encountered themselves was the discrimination their children had encountered. When asked what they ideally wanted from their experience in the U.S., several respondents replied that they wanted a better future for their children than what they would get in their country of origin. Therefore, having a child being told that he is not from Palestine but from Jordan by school administrators, essentially erasing the respondent's and her child's history, or having neighbors who do not let their children play with their children, was upsetting to the respondents.

One respondent stated that while negative experiences in various spaces which she perceived as occurring due to her race and religiosity made her feel uncomfortable, this

uncomfortable feeling was trumped by the concern she had that she and her family and friends, as well as others in the community were being watched by the U.S. government - including tapped phones and visits from the FBI - and the accompanying fear of incarceration of family, friends, and acquaintances. Several respondents reported actual or perceived surveillance by the U.S. government, including visits from the FBI and feeling certain that their phone lines were tapped.

# CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This study has sought to examine the junctures of ethnic identity, class, religiosity, and belonging as they affect the experiences of female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants in various spaces within the context of the Atlanta, Georgia area and to draw attention to the 'othering' of immigrants in American society. Previous literature has confirmed that there is not a monolithic female Middle Eastern/Muslim immigrant experience. A limitation of this study was the fact that access was not obtained into the lower classes and refugee immigrant circles, therefore the experiences of these women in various spaces in the Atlanta area cannot be analyzed at this time, however, the various spaces of encounter of female participants who wore *hijab* confirmed that, in general, they experienced more, and more direct, discrimination than those participants who wore Western style attire. A main finding of this study is that even middle- to upper-middle class respondents who dressed in Western styles reported indirect negative experiences, such as overhearing coworkers promulgate anti-Middle Eastern and anti-Muslim sentiments.

Freeman (2005) concludes that class and religiosity play a significant role in differences between female immigrants' experiences of freedom, safety, and mobility. While mobility tends to be more problematic for lower class immigrants, this study had found that middle class immigrants who wear the *hijab* may experience mobility issues as well. One respondent who wears an abaya and headscarf said that she is not welcomed in many places and is concerned about straying too far from her home in the event that she doesn't know where she is and needs help. Safety was an issue for several participants who wear the *hijab* who reported being yelled at in parking lots by other Americans, changing what feels like a safe public space into a

threatening open space. Furthermore, the concept of freedom for all U.S. citizens is challenged when respondents cannot wear religious attire and go where they please without being harassed.

Another main finding of this study is that, in general, religiosity is not a factor in discouraging respondents from participating in the host society. While the majority of participants considered themselves to be practicing Muslims, most of them have jobs in which they work with middle-class Americans, all of them patronize public spaces which are frequented by other Americans, and all respondents mentioned places which happen to be frequented by other Americans as their favorite local public places to visit. While those female immigrants who wear the *hijab* have reported more instances of direct discrimination than those who do not wear the *hijab*, despite all of this the majority of them were not discouraged from visiting most non-domestic spaces in the Atlanta area.

This study has attempted to show that, since women and minorities in particular may feel especially uncomfortable in public spaces (Mitchell, 2000), the experience for a minority woman can be particularly harsh. Public spaces can produce fear and insecurity in Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants who may be perceived by some of their fellow Americans as 'enemies of the U.S.'. Research participants, particularly those who wear the *hijab*, have experienced aggression and discrimination by other Americans who have made it clear that they did not believe that these women belonged in the U.S. Because of the hyper-visibility and scrutiny that some immigrants face in public spaces, especially in rural and suburban areas, Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants often feel that the burden is on them to make sure Americans are comfortable sharing public spaces with them (Marvasti and McKinney, 2004). One participant, who wears the *hijab*, illustrated Marvasti and McKinney's concept in that she changed the style and color of her day to day attire in order to avoid the 'strange' stares she was

receiving. In addition, this respondent ceased to visit fitness spaces in which she felt that others were particularly unsettled by her attire.

Muslim women are also subjected to scrutiny by their 'community' (Nagel, 2005). As the community sees it, certain public spaces are viewed as dangerous for women to occupy, danger that can be minimized in many instances through community norms of appropriate female dress. The result is that young Muslim women, especially those who simply want to 'fit in' with American society, may end up feeling more uncomfortable in spaces where there are other members of the community than they do in typical 'American' spaces. Several of the younger Muslim respondents supported this concept in that they stated that they changed their day to day attire when they knew that they were going to be in the presence of other members of the community.

Cultural conflict may occur when immigrants have relatively different customs and beliefs than those found in the destination country. This can result in racist prejudice of a majority population towards immigrants and can lead to feelings of alienation for the immigrants. Respondents experienced varying degrees of cultural conflict in public, employment, educational, and organizational spaces. For example, in many spaces in the U.S., it is sometimes assumed that all those present have similar beliefs, including religious beliefs. One participant's experience of attending meetings that were always begun with a Christian prayer, and with meeting attendants openly discussing Islamic terrorists while the participant was present and wearing Muslim attire, had the effect of alienating the research participant. Other respondents have reported experiencing cultural conflict due to the lack of understanding and respect by their fellow Americans, of non-Christian religious requirements.

Another goal of this project was to highlight the fact that American media attaches negative meanings to images of Muslims and Middle Easterners, and examine the ways that these negative meanings affect the day to day lives of the respondents. Previous studies have concluded that anti-Middle Eastern and anti-Muslim sentiments, reported in and reproduced by the media, have aroused more open racism in America. Respondents' experiences underscore the concept that socially acceptable negative stereotypes in the media become socially acceptable fodder for negative stereotypes in mainstream American society. Many participants mentioned instances where fellow Americans did not seem to think twice about giving voice to negative Middle Eastern and Muslim stereotypes, even in the workplace. Furthermore, respondents' experiences in workspaces support Abdelrazek's (2005:140) argument that "American society tends to lump all women from Muslim countries into the category of 'Arab', and to view all 'Arabs' as 'Muslims', and all Muslims as practicing a particular rigid kind of Islam".

This research has sought a greater understanding of how employment and educational spaces can be sources of racism and emotional discomfort. For one thing, having to account for one's religion or culture in the workplace can be a considerable chore (Marvasti and McKinney, 2004). Furthermore**,** some respondents have felt the need to stand up for their religion, culture or ethnic background when overhearing negative stereotypes about Middle Easterners and Muslims propagated by coworkers, or when receiving unsolicited emails by coworkers or colleagues with anti-Middle Eastern or anti-Muslim sentiments. Respondents have been put in the position of either remaining silent while others make slanderous remarks about their religion, culture, or ethnic background, or of possibly 'starting trouble' by standing up for themselves, perhaps even alienating themselves from their coworkers. Having to endure this type of racism in the workplace undoubtedly has an adverse effect on the morale and productivity of the immigrants

who encounter it. Furthermore, one respondent believes that she was passed over for a job promotion because of her ethnicity. In addition, work related functions and after work get-togethers can be problematic for Muslim employees who once again find themselves alienated. Muslims who choose not to attend work-related functions, or do attend but refuse to drink alcohol or eat non-halal meat, may be seen in a negative light by coworkers, further straining relations. One respondent who did not attend after work get-togethers felt certain that her career was negatively affected because of it.

Educational level and religious attire have an affect on the employability of an immigrant, thus playing a major role in an immigrant's ability to assimilate. While most of the respondents in this study have a high level of education and are therefore able to acquire highly skilled jobs, work opportunities in the U.S. may be scarce for refugees, who are often less well-suited for migration than are economic migrants. Furthermore, the *hijab* may serve as a barrier between the woman wearing it and employment. One respondent, who has a master's degree, reported having difficulties obtaining even unskilled work. Interestingly, she was the only respondent who wore an abaya and headscarf. A further area of interest would be the possibility that the more 'religious' the attire worn by an immigrant, the more severe is the discrimination against her in the U.S. If this correlation is determined, it is possible that it could be attributed to stereotypical media images of Muslim women in the Middle East who are usually shown wearing black.

Ethnic owned businesses may be important to immigrants for the way they conjure up an immigrant's country of origin (Cattell et al., 2008), helping the immigrant to make sense of the meaning of 'home', which may now be in the U.S. but is also linked to the immigrant's country of origin. Middle Eastern and/or Muslim owned businesses are interspersed throughout

Atlanta, and all respondents mentioned visiting at least a few. In addition, the mosque and its religious community plays a role in establishing a sense of home and well-being, serves as a place to socialize, and provides much needed services for some Muslim immigrants in the U.S. (Ehrkamp, 2007).

Past reports state that the vast majority of Middle Easterners and Muslims have experienced special caring, kindness and protection from persons outside their communities (Cainkar, 2002). This study supports this finding in that respondents have commented that some Americans have shown respect for their customs and beliefs, as well as concern for their well-being. Furthermore, in spite of any negative experiences, many participants believe that their lives have improved since moving to the U.S.

While negative experiences in various spaces due to discrimination are on the minds of female Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants, one respondent stated that her top concern with living in the U.S. was that she and her family and friends were being watched by the U.S. government, and the accompanying fear of incarceration. Several other respondents also reported visits by the FBI as well as the belief that their phones were tapped.

This look into the spaces of encounter of female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants in the Atlanta, Georgia area has been able to scratch the surface by examining the daily spaces of those female immigrants of the middle and upper middle classes. However, a deeper gaze into the lives of female Middle Eastern and/or Muslim immigrants in the Atlanta area can start with the examination of lower class immigrants and refugees, along with the neighborhoods which they inhabit, namely Clarkston and parts of Decatur. Access into these circles might be difficult, but with additional time could probably be achieved.

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# APPENDIX THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Biographical Info

1. What is your age?
2. What is your marital status? ( ) married ( ) divorced

   ( ) never been married
3. What part of the Atlanta area do you live in?
4. How long have you lived in the Atlanta area?
5. Why did you move to the U.S.?
6. Where are you originally from?
7. How do you define yourself? (Middle Eastern, Arab, American, Muslim, Arab-American, etc.)
8. How do you define your religion? Are you practicing?
9. How would you describe your standard of living?

   Greatly below middle class ( )

   Somewhat below middle class ( )

   Middle class ( )

   Somewhat above middle class ( )

   Greatly above middle class ( )

Attire

10. Do you wear *hijab* or other distinct Muslim or Middle Eastern attire? Briefly explain how you normally dress.

11. Do you modify the way you dress because of where you are going? Why do you do this? Give an example.

Travel Patterns

12. Are there restrictions you or other members of your family place on yourself for where you visit or travel? If so, what are these restrictions?
13. How do you typically travel? ( ) own car ( ) public transportation

    ( ) walk ( ) someone drives me

    ( ) other _____
14. Are there places you refuse to go because you have had bad experiences there? Please briefly explain.
15. In an average week, which places do you visit? Please name specific locations.

    Shopping-

    Work-

    School-

    Religious-

    Childcare-

    Other child-related (example: soccer or dance classes)-

    Social-

    Leisure or recreational activities (example: bowling, aerobics class, movie, etc.)-

    Personal needs (example: banking, hairdresser, visiting library, etc.)-

    Other-

16. What type of exclusively Middle Eastern- or Muslim-owned or operated businesses do you visit?
17. Do you go to non-Middle Eastern or non-Muslim owned businesses? If so, which businesses do you go to? Why do you go to these businesses?
18. Do you ever feel unsafe upon entering your mosque or church? Why? Briefly describe any negative experiences that you have had.

Work/School

19. In addition to your responsibilities at home, do you work outside of the home or go to school? If so, where?
20. Are you likely to run into members of your community in this space?
21. Have you ever received anti-Middle Eastern or anti-Islamic email (including cartoons or jokes) from a coworker or fellow student? How did this make you feel? Did you confront the coworker or fellow student about the email? If so, what happened?
22. Do you feel that you are treated differently at work/school due to your Middle Eastern or Muslim background? Please explain or give examples.
23. Have you ever felt uncomfortable at a work- or school-related function (example: party or other social event)? Please explain why.

Rural/Suburban Experiences

24. Have you ever visited the rural areas surrounding Atlanta? What was your experience like in public spaces in these areas?

25. Have you noticed whether Americans in the suburbs and rural areas treat you differently from Americans in urban areas? Please explain.

Public Places

26. Which places do you define as public?
27. Do you ever feel that you are in danger in public places? Please explain why.
28. In which public places do you feel most comfortable?
29. In which public places do you feel uncomfortable?
30. In which public places do you feel unsafe?
31. Have you ever had rude comments made to you pertaining to your ethnicity or religion in a public place? Please explain.
32. Do you feel like you are treated courteously and fairly by non-Middle Eastern and non-Muslim people whom you encounter outside of the home? For instance, police officers, store clerks, etc.? Please explain.
33. Do you feel safe in the neighborhood that you live in? Why or why not?

Other

34. What do you ideally want from your experience in the U.S.?
35. What are your favorite local places? Why are they special to you?